Stourbridge
CHRONICLE

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Roofer lied about his skills, experience and qualifications

DIY FRAUDSTER PUT BEHIND BARS

Report by Annabal Bagdi

A ROGUE trader who claimed he featured in the TV show DIY SOS has been jailed for five years.

Unqualified James Carter – who drove around in a van falsely claiming he had been on the popular DIY show – was told his 'shoddy' work had 'desecrated' cherished homes.

Recorder Benjamin Nicholls condemned the Stourbridge fraudster for his 'hypocrisy and bare-faced cheek' which left 15 victims out of pocket to the tune of £140,000 in total.

Sentencing at Stafford Crown Court, the recorder said: "This type of offending undermines public confidence in tradesmen and has an impact on the majority of tradesmen who are both skilled and honest.

James Carter – jailed

"He misrepresented and lied about his skills, experience and qualifications and was prepared to use forged documents.

"He used false names and addresses to try and ensure that disgruntled customers could not track him down, and when all else failed, he resorted to abuse and aggression."

Carter's offending may have caused a further loss of almost £60,000 to his victims, who have had to shell out cash to fix his work.

Names

Carter, 40, targeted families across the West Midlands, including people living in Kingswinford, Dudley, Halesowen, Smethwick and Bilston. He used eight different trading names, including Central Roofing Services, to cheat customers over almost two years.

Defence barrister Mr Chris O'Gorman said Carter, of Vicarage Road, Wollaston, 'wants nothing more to do with self employment'.

Carter was made subject to a criminal behaviour order forbidding him from carrying out building or roofing unless he is qualified. He admitted two counts of fraud after previously admitting a three counts. The court heard he was also in breach of a suspended sentence from October 2016 for benefit fraud.

AWARD FOR CABBIE WHO SNARED HAMMER THUG

Taxi driver Muhammad Ilyas, from Dudley, is presented with the Good Citizen's Award by Chief Constable Dave Thompson

A BRAVE taxi driver who helped officers arrest a violent robber who attacked a pregnant woman with a hammer in Dudley has received a West Midlands Police award.

Muhammad Ilyas was driving by when he saw the horror attack take place, which left the woman – aged in her 30s – with a fractured skull at Dixons Green.

As a fellow passer-by went to comfort the victim – who had a child with her – Mr Ilyas joined another man in following the attacker to ensure he didn't escape justice.

Officers arrived promptly and arrested the 49-year-old attacker when it emerged he had tried to snatch an elderly woman's handbag just minutes before the hammer attack, which took place on October 28, 2016.

The attacker went on to be jailed for a minimum of 10 years at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Mr Ilyas, aged 25, from Dudley, has been awarded a Chief Constable's Good Citizen's Award in recognition of his bravery and public-spirited actions in helping to catch the vicious robber.

This award was handed over to Mr Ilyas by Chief Constable Dave Thompson during an awards ceremony at the West Midlands Police force's Tally Ho! base in Edgbaston.

FINANCE

Councillors clash over tax increase

COUNCILLORS clashed in a fierce debate before an increase in council tax was approved in Dudley on Monday night.

The full council met to set the council tax rate for 2018/19 but the debate became so heated one member stormed out.

The 4.49 per cent increase was approved by by 62 to one votes, after Ukip councillor Star Anderton left the room having earlier been ordered to stay quiet by Mayor of Dudley Councllor Dave Tyler.

The Conservative-run authority had proposed the hike, criticised by Ukip councillors who wanted it to be just 2.99 per cent.

HONOUR

Sports centre will be named after Duncan

A NEW leisure centre planned for Dudley town centre will be named after football legend Duncan Edwards.

Dudley Council has plans to replace the centre in Wellington Road with a new facility by 2021. It has also been announced that 'Duncan Edwards Day' will see the Dudley-born footballer, who died 60 years ago, celebrated annually on his birthday, October 1.

● **The greatest, says Doc – Page 19**

TRAGEDY

Family home for sale after murder

THE home of a family torn apart by a vicious knife attack has been put up for sale.

Aaron Barley murdered Tracey Wilkinson and her 13-year-old son Pierce at Rathmore Lodge on Greyhound Lane in Norton, Stourbridge, in March last year. Father Peter Wilkinson and daughter Lydia Wilkinson were reported to have moved back into the family home but the property is now for sale at £650,000 via The Lee Shaw Partnership.

INSIDE

CORBYN ON HIGH STREET

PAGE 2

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£11.8m spent on agency staff at hospital

THE trust that runs Russells Hall Hospital has been criticised by a councillor after spending almost £12 million on agency staff in one year.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the Dudley hospital, spent £11.8m in 2017 because of the shortage of staff.

After the figure was revealed following a Freedom of Information request, Councillor Paul Brothwood, leader of the Dudley Ukip group, said: "This figure is scandalous. It is an extortionate amount of money.

"We have a real concern on temporary staff. We want to see money invested in the service that staff represent."

Data has also show that almost half of the money – 47 per cent – was spent on cover for nurses.

For the financial year of 2016/17, from April to April, the Trust spent £187.1m on permanent staff, while the cost on agency staff was £14.1m.

Its agency spend in 2015/16 was £9.6m while its permanent staff spend was £179.8m.

Diane Wake, chief executive of the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We use agency staff to cover staff shortages and ensure our patients are safe and cared for by appropriately skilled staff at all times. Because of the high demand on our services throughout December and January, we opened extra beds in the hospital and used a number of temporary staff to support us in caring for these extra patients.

"Our use of agency staff will obviously reduce once we are able to fill vacant posts and we are doing all we can to recruit. "

Labour leader in call for more police officers

JEREMY Corbyn took to the streets with police in Stourbridge before pledging that a Labour Government would recruit 10,000 extra officers.

The Labour leader was starting the party's bid to win back the Wollaston and Stourbridge Town ward in the upcoming local elections in May.

It was also part of a Labour action day against police cuts at the weekend. He said: "The resources have to be made available to keep people safe."

He held a meeting at the town's Chemistry Cafe with West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson to talk about police cuts and rising crime figures, as well as talking a walk down the High Street, posing for selfies on the way.

Invest

Mr Corbyn tweeted afterwards: "I've been talking with police officers in Stourbridge. The Tories have cut police numbers and left forces without the resources they need. Labour will recruit 10,000 extra police officers. You can't protect communities on the cheap.

"There is no doubt that crime is being made worse by police funding cuts," he said. "If you have fewer officers on the beat and then you have slower clear up rates, which becomes part of the problem.

"There are also general issues of dislocation where you close youth centres and dismiss youth workers.

"We have to invest in the police but we must also invest in what I call the social infrastructure that goes around people's lives."

Despite a shocking increase in knife crime which has seen 21 stabbings in the West Midlands so far this year, he rejected calls for compulsory prison sentences for those found guilty of carrying a blade.

Mr Corbyn said: "A mandatory jail term is not necessarily the answer. Community service and restorative justice can be a much more effective tool."

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn in Stourbridge town centre with Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson, right

Mr Corbyn poses for a selfie during his visit

Mr Corbyn chats with staff at the Chemistry Cafe

Residents in plea for action on danger road

CONCERNED residents have called for traffic calming measures to be installed on a 'dangerous' Dudley road which they say is blighted by speeding motorists.

Residents living in Dreadnought Road, Pensnett, are due to launch a petition calling on Dudley Council to take action as they fear it is only a matter of time before there is a fatal accident. It comes after the latest crash on the road which saw a motorist taken to hospital.

Carl Evans, aged 29, who lives on the road, said: "I'm scared to walk my three-year-old daughter down the road due to speeding motorists.

"Myself and my wife sit in our living room at night waiting for a bang and a crash to happen. Cars speed along the road all hours of the day.

"I would definitely like to see traffic calming measures installed on the road. I don't want it to take someone to get killed for action to be taken. It is a dangerous road."

Proposals for traffic calming measures have been backed local councillor Judy Foster, who represents the Brockmoor and Pensnett ward.

She said: "I am concerned about the incident which took place. I will speak to residents, the council and police to see if we have got a problem down there and call for action if appropriate. I would back traffic calming measures if needed."

The incident happened shortly after 11pm on February 21 when emergency services were called to reports of a car that had rolled over. A passenger was taken to hospital.

Fundraiser for homeless charity

MUSICIANS will come together to raise funds and awareness for homelessness in April at a Stourbridge pub.

The event on April 22 will aim to raise money for Leslie's Care Packages for the Homeless which provides practical support for homeless people in the Black Country.

Vi Wood, founder of Leslie's Care Packages for the Homeless, said: "People really are coming together and it's absolutely amazing and it's needed."

Musicians taking part include Rockin Lee, Sid River, Linda Marita Smith, John Stranks, Darren Shaggy Hyde, Ian Marrey, The Daises, The Missed and Matthew Lee Partridge. It takes place at Katie Fitzgerald's in Enville Street.

The fundraising event is being hosted by We Shall Overcome.

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Members of lorry jacking gang are sentenced

THIEVES escaped with almost £500,000 worth of metal after targeting 11 lorries in as many months, a judge heard.

Loads of aluminium, sheet metal and copper piping were taken between November 2016 and last October, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Foreign drivers were lured from their vehicles and members of the gang then drove off with the truck and its cargo, said Mr Graham Russell, prosecuting.

In one case the thieves were forced to flee by a driver armed with a hammer in Walsall, while the gang were foiled by another who refused to leave his cab in Cradley Heath.

The gang used a tracker blocker to stop the stolen lorries being monitored after escaping with a total haul worth £470,000. The trucks were driven a short distance before the tractor unit was swapped for a cab on false plates.

On August 17 a lorry with £55,000 worth of copper was taken. Five days later a driver with a load of copper valued at £89,000 was parked in Wednesbury and was woken by 35-year-old Craig Mills who asked if he was ready to unload. Mills called the driver out of his cab where his place was quickly taken by another member of the gang as Mills escaped in a waiting VW Golf. That car was chased by police, reaching speeds of up to 100mph along the M6, before it was halted by a stinger near Junction 10.

Fled

The occupants of the car fled to a compound where Mills and Anthony Kennedy, aged 34, were arrested. The trailer and load were never recovered.

In further incidents, a £220,000 batch of tyres was stolen from Central Avenue, Cradley Heath, on September 19 and on October 30 a lorry carrying metal worth £60,000 was taken from a Bilston company. The replacement vehicle was traced with 44-year-old Thomas Arnold behind the wheel.

Kennedy, of Davis Avenue, Tipton, on licence after being freed from a robbery sentence, and Mills, of Galbraith Close, Coseley, both admitted conspiracy to steal.The former was jailed for two years eight months while the latter, who has poor health, received a 12 month term suspended for two years. Arnold, of Neptune Street, Tipton admitted taking a vehicle without permission and got 20 weeks jail suspended for two years.

Shirts make £11k

ALBION have raised more than £11,000 for charity through the auction of their shirts dedicated to Cyrille Regis. The Baggies wore the tops with the Regis motif for their 3-2 defeat to Southampton.

Car did somersault after 80mph chase

AN UNINSURED 23-year-old driver with no licence drove at up to 80mph on residential roads to escape police – until he crashed into a roundabout, sending the borrowed Megane into a somersault, a court head.

An ambulance was called for a pregnant passenger in the crashed car.

The chase began when Kieron Ratcliffe-Thompson sped past a police patrol car on Halesowen Road, Netherton, on August 20.

The officers followed his silver Megane as it travelled at 50mph before turning into a housing estate, ignoring the patrol car's blue lights and siren, said Ms Caroline Harris, prosecuting at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

The father-of-two was seen to go through red lights and, on returning to Netherton Road, he reached 80mph as he headed for Cinder Bank, causing officers behind to call off the chase because of danger to other road users.

One of the officers was heard to say 'He's going to kill someone' just seconds before the Megane mounted a roundabout, sending it into a somersault before landing back on its wheels.

Police Ratcliffe-Thompson at the scene and called an ambulance for the pregnant passenger.

The court heard that the defendant had borrowed the car from a family friend.

Ms Samantha Forsyth, defending, said Ratcliffe-Thompson was autistic and suffered from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He had broken up with his partner shortly before the incident but they were now back together.

She added that he 'panicked' when he saw the police car because he knew he was uninsured and had no licence.

Ratcliffe-Thompson, of Victoria Street, Cradley Heath, pleaded guilty to dangerous driving and driving without insurance or a licence.

Judge James Burbidge, QC, handed him a 10-month jail term but suspended it for two years, with a requirement to take part in a rehabilitation course.

He also imposed a three-month curfew, from 9pm to 6am, and banned him from driving for 30 months.

Driver cleared of causing death of motorcyclist

A MOTORIST who admitted speeding but denied racing with a motorcyclist who was killed in a crash has been cleared of causing the man's death by dangerous driving.

It took a jury at Wolverhampton Crown Court 47 minutes to unanimously acquit civil engineer Dylan Dudgon after a trial held last week.

The 42-year-old, who was at the wheel of a 2.8-litre Audi A4 Quattro estate, insisted: "We were independently speeding. It was not a race."

CCTV analysis showed the 42-year-old was travelling at 68mph in a 30 limit while his friend, pub manager Elliot Beddow, was going even faster at 78mph on a Harley Davidson.

The defendant described how he followed the bike after it accelerated 'hard' away from a set of traffic lights onto Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill, until the machine 'inexplicably' slowed and was passed by the Audi before Elliott overtook him again moments before the crash.

They were filmed six tenths of a second and around 60ft apart moments after the bike had overtaken the car approaching a corner where the 20-year-old rider lost control. He was killed when the machine slid into a set of railings in Brettell Lane. The accident happened shortly after 2am on September 3, 2016.

Shocked

Dudgon told the court: "The first I was aware of the bike overtaking me was the sound of the exhaust. Then he was adjacent to the driver's door. It shocked me because of the noise. I shuddered.

"I was driving too fast, in excess of the speed limit. The bike has gone past me travelling just to the right of the line in the centre of the road. Then his back wheel went from underneath him. I slowed down and the bike's gone down. It spun and there were sparks flying everywhere."

Dudgon stopped at the scene to let three passengers get out to offer assistance while he parked his car round a corner, the court was told.

He continued: "I ran straight up to Elliot. He was on the pavement. Other people were there. I held his hand and tried to speak to him but got no response. I knelt with him for a short amount of time until the paramedics came. They asked for a coat and I ran to the car to get one and put it over Elliot. Police were arriving. I went over to Elliot, wished him bon voyage. I was aware he had passed away."

Engineer Dylan Dudgon was acquitted by a jury

Motorcyclist Elliot Beddow, aged 20, died in crash

Dudgon and his friends then ordered a taxi and left the scene without him notifying police that he had been the driver of the car which was immediately behind the bike when it crashed. He explained: "I had just witnessed the worst thing I had ever seen in my life. I was in shock and none of the police asked anything of me, until one told me to clear off."

When interviewed by police several days after the crash, he said: "I know, with hindsight, I should have stayed there."

The court heard that the two men had known each other for around three years and, according to the defendant, became close friends. Dudgon had been at The Mitre in Stourbridge town centre for over seven hours during which he 'predominantly' drank lemonade and played darts.

The victim, who had time off from his job at Katie Fitzgerald's pub in the town, had joined him during the evening and the pair were still there at 1am when the bar closed and left in convoy intending to go to a Brierley Hill night club. He was described as an inexperienced rider.

The court heard Dudgon, of Victoria Road, Brierley Hill, who had a previous conviction for a drug offence, was seen throwing a sock into a hedge before leaving the scene. It was found to contain digital scales, cocaine and ecstasy. He admitted possession of the drugs and was fined a total of £500 with £500 costs.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MP joins better education group

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has joined a new Parliamentary campaign to improve education in order to tackle long-term youth unemployment in the Black Country.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Education brings together MPs and education experts to work for improvements.

Mr Austin said he will use his membership to promote his campaign for improved results in schools, more apprenticeships, higher levels of technical education and new university facilities in the Black Country. "We need to make education and skills our number one priority," he added.

Man admits being the getaway driver

A 53-year-old man has admitted acting as the getaway driver for a raid on a convenience store in Stourbridge.

Delroy Nettleford, of Stourbridge Road, Dudley, pleaded guilty to the robbery at the One Stop shop in Worcester Street, Stourbridge, on September 1.

The plea was entered on the day his trial was due to start. It was accepted by the prosecution on the basis that he was the driver and only became aware that force would be used shortly before the robbery. He was remanded in custody until March 27.

Record visitors figure at museum

THE Black Country Living Museum celebrated its busiest year in 2017.

More than 330,000 visitors walked through the doors of the museum last year, up eight per cent on its previous record attendance.

The museum, in Tipton Road, Dudley, welcomed a record-breaking total of 332,778 peopl. In 2016, the popular museum welcomed 306,100 visitors.

Laura Wakelin, deputy chief executive for communications and marketing, said: "That's 26,000 more people visiting the museum than in 2016 which in itself was a fantastic year."

Call for volunteers at park anniversary event

VOLUNTEERS are needed to help stage a festival event in the Black Country this summer. The Tividale Park Festival on July 7 will include Tividale's Got Talent.

To get involved contact Max Robinson, of Friends of Tividale Park, by email marobinson99@yahoo.com. The event, which also celebrates the park's 90th anniversary, will run from 11am to 5pm. Stewards, stall holders and entertainers are sought.

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COUNTY NEWS

Sabbath rocker to host charity lunch

BLACK Sabbath legend Tony Iommi is hosting an exclusive lunch to raise money for a new hospital cancer centre.

The event will take place on April 20 where the rock guitarist will share stories from his life and career, touring the world with one of the biggest bands of all time. He will be raising funds for the Solihull Hospital and Heartlands Hospital charities for a new cancer centre at Solihull Hospital. The lunch will be held at the Opus restaurant in Birmingham.

Tickets are £100 each or £950 for a table of 10. Tables can be booked by calling 0121 371 4852.

Maternity survey for boosting care

HEALTH bosses have said women who gave birth at a hospital during either January or February could receive a survey asking about their care.

Mothers who gave birth at Russells Hall Hospital could be surveyed in April about care they received.

The National Maternity Survey, which is being run by the Care Quality Commission, will ask women about their experiences of antenatal care, childbirth and postnatal care.

The results will provide the the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust with feedback to help improve quality of care and the experience of women using maternity services.

Museum tour is being signed

MONTHLY British Sign Language tours are being offered at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley.

They run at 2pm and 3pm on Saturdays with the next on March 31.

The tours of the Tipton Road site are conducted completely in British Sign Language for deaf and hard of hearing visitors with no spoken interpretation. Other dates are April 28 and May 19. Book in advance by calling 0121 520 8054 or e-mailing bookings@bclm.com

Bronze for brewery's stout festival offering

A Black Country brewery won a bronze award at a national winter ales festival.

Fixed Wheel in Blackheath was third in the stouts category at the Great British Beer Festival Winter in Norwich with Blackheath Stout, a five per cent alcohol brew made at the micro brewery's base on Long Lane Trading Estate.

Lucky escape six months before fatal fall

ANOTHER man was left hanging from railings after trying to climb the same 'faulty' gate as Chris Brookes, an inquest was told.

The incident happened just six months before the tragedy at Wolverhampton bus station on October 29 when a man tried to climb over the gate and slipped, but was saved as he got caught on railings and was left hanging last April.

The inquest into the tragic death of Mr Brookes, of Tame Road, heard he was on his way home from a night out as he went through a fire exit at Wolverhampton bus station, which could not be opened from the outside once shut, onto an outdoor 'balcony'.

He is believed to have walked along a narrow path – between a brick wall and metal railing – towards a gate which connected to the bridge near the railway station. Mr Brookes fell 40ft onto the road below. He was taken to Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital but medics were unable to save him.

Since the death of Mr Brookes, the first fire escape leading outside has remained locked and will be fixed so it can be opened from both sides, the inquest was told. Extra emergency lighting and warning signs have been installed and a push bar placed on the faulty door. It also emerged at the inquest that a security team did not respond when Mr Brookes set off an alarm as he opened the first fire exit.

Tim Johnson, deputy managing director at City of Wolverhampton Council, said: "We understand that the coroner will be formally requesting further information from us and other parties."

Father killed in late night gate tragedy

A YOUNG father plunged 40ft to his death trying to climb over a faulty gate at a bus station, an inquest heard.

Chris Brookes mistakenly believed a gate was locked and decided to scramble over it after becoming trapped between two fire exits at Wolverhampton bus station.

But the Dudley-born man slipped and plummeted onto a bus lane of Wolverhampton ring road. The 22-year-old's death came six months after another man almost died trying to scale the same gate.

Chris Brookes

Fire safety inspector Stephen Clegg told the inquest Black Country Coroner's Court: "I don't believe that gate was locked. When I looked, I concluded it was faulty. There's a knack. If you don't hit it right, it appears locked."

Coroner Zafar Siddique, who recorded a conclusion of accidental death on Mr Brookes said he will now write a Preventing Future Deaths report.

Mr Brookes, of Oldbury, had been out celebrating brother Craig Brookes' birthday but got separated from the group. His brother told the inquest that Mr Brookes, an assembler at Elta Fans in Kingswinford, was probably trying to get home when at the bus station at 2am on October 29.

He suffered a fractured skull, ribs, spine and arm in the fall and died as a result of a head trauma, pathologist Dr Paul Hiley said.

Mr Brookes, who died before partner Sarah Jayne Collins gave birth to his second child, had taken a small amount of cocaine and had 108mg of alcohol in 100ml of blood.

Mother hits out over partner's death

Sarah Jayne Collins with Chris Junior, named after his father who died weeks before

TEARS of despair and joy – young mother Sarah Jayne could not hide her emotions after giving birth to her son, whose father died less than two months before.

Miss Collins, from Oldbury, lost partner Chris Brookes after he fell to his death while attempting to exit Wolverhampton's bus station.

She said she was 'disgusted' on hearing at his inquest how a faulty fire escape probably led to the 22-year-old climbing the gate from which he fell onto the ring road below. It came six months after another incident when man fell when climbing the gate, but in that case had a lucky escape.

Miss Collins, whose son Chris Junior was named after his father, said: "If the fire escape door was working my child's dad would have still be here today – it's disgusting."

She added: " Considering the same thing happened before, this should have been sorted and the exit be easy to open. As it was, Chris tried to climb the gate and fell."

Coroner Zafar Siddique recorded a conclusion of accidental death and said he will be writing a Preventing Future Deaths report.

Benches dedicated to Mr Brookes have been installed at Gornal Crematorium and at Wrens Nest.

Rural fringe of town is selected for new homes

THOUSANDS of homes could be built on the edge of the Dudley borough after the area was identified as a 'prime location' to help meet a housing shortfall.

Land near Stourbridge has been included as one of the preferred sites in a report assessing where tens of thousands of properties will be built over the next 20 years to meet the needs of the rising Midlands population.

An 'urban extension' could be created, providing between 1,500 and 7,500 homes, according to the report.

Housing bosses are coming under pressure to commit to sites for new developments.

Land needs to be found for more than 20,000 homes to be built by 2036 and, with space at a premium in densely populated areas such as Birmingham and Wolverhampton, officials have had to look further afield.

A report on the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area also said there was an onus on all councils across the West Midlands to 'work together to meet housing needs'.

The site south of Dudley is one four to be identified for 'urban extensions', with the others being in Staffordshire – north of Penkridge, east of Lichfield and north of Tamworth.

Finer details of where the site would be have not yet been revealed.

Stourbridge councillor Nicolas Barlow said he would be opposed to plans that threatened green belt.

He said: "I would be disappointed to have new housing built on green belt when we know we have got significant brownfield sites that are absolutely no use at all."

Amritsar flights from Birmingham

AIR India's new twice weekly nonstop service to Amritsar from Birmingham Airport has been launched.

The airport saw Indian drummers and dancers weaving their way through passengers who were joined by MPs, business leaders and members of the Sikh UK community for the first flight on February 20.

Amritsar complements the established Delhi service from Birmingham Airport. The service has carried more than 600,000 passengers in the four years it has operated using the Boeing 787-8 'Dreamliner' aircraft.

William Pearson, of Birmingham Airport, said: "The Midlands has the second largest Asian community in the UK and so it is great news that we are making more of India accessible to our passengers for business, leisure and to visit family and friends."

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Beauty spot car park is declared off limits again

A CAR park at a beauty spot near Halesowen has been closed amid claims of drug abuse and sexual activity.

The area at Uffmoor Wood, near Halesowen, has been closed off by The Woodland Trust – just three months after the woodlands re-opened following the trust's first ever wood closure due to anti-social activities.

The decision has sparked anger among members of the woodland's friends group, who say they have not seen any inappropriate behaviour since the beauty spot was declared open again.

The group said on Facebook: "The members have been monitoring the woods on a daily basis at varying times of the day and have seen nothing untoward except for the odd dog off a lead."

Hayley Green councillor Jeff Hill said: "There is a lot of concern from local people that the problems are being overstated and I hope the Woodland Trust will be able to address this. There are people who are walking their dogs who feel spied on and are not doing anything untoward at all."

Toby Bancroft, regional manager for the Woodland Trust, said he was disappointed the charity had had to take such action. "The continued anti-social behaviour makes this wood unsafe, which is a shame because it is a great place to visit," he said.

Memorial game to honour Richard

TICKETS have gone on sale for a memorial football match in honour of a much-loved former referee and Albion mascot.

Former Albion stars Andy Johnson, Geoff Horsfield and Lee Hughes are to turn out for the game which will be played between Boing FC and an Albion Legends side, payingtribute to Richard Eades, who died in December, aged 42. The event will be held at Halesowen Town FC on April 29.

Mascots from other football clubs will take part in a special mascot match before the main event while there will also be an nine-a-side football tournament earlier in the day. Tickets are available at www.ticketailor.com/events/richardeadesmemorialfund raiser/148087

Microbar proposed

A NEW microbar could be opened in a former store. Plans have been submitted to convert the former Select and Save in Regent Road, Tividale, into a bar. They have been lodged with Sandwell Council.

Hero's brass stand stolen from church

The stolen brass book stand which had been used in services for more than 90 years

AN 'irreplaceable' brass book stand that was gifted to a church nearly a century ago by a hero's war widow has been stolen during a burglary.

Thieves broke in to the vestry at St Mary's Church in Oldswinford taking the stand and food donated the congregation for the Black Country Food Bank.

The book stand was given to the church by Elizabeth Lambert, wife of Gunner Arthur Henry Lambert, four years after his death during the First World War in 1918 and has been used at services ever since.

The church was open to the public at the time of the theft but valuables were locked away in the vestry. A bolted door was forced by the crooks.

Church leaders have appealed for the book stand, which holds the Bible on the altar during services, to be returned. St Mary's has been closed during the day following the break-in, while officials look at increasing security. There had been previous attempted break-ins.

Parish administrator John Sutton said: "I'm disappointed more than anything. We do try to help people who are in need as far as we can. If they had just come and asked us we would have helped. They didn't have to break in, damage the church and help themselves.

"We would like to have the book stand back so it can be used again in the church."

Arthur Lambert grew up on Hagley Road, close to where the Tesco store is today, and had an affinity with the church, where he was a choir boy and Bible class conductor before going off to war.

Firm fined £23k after worker loses a finger

A METAL firm has been fined £23,300 at court after a steel worker's hand was dragged into machinery costing him a finger.

The victim, the longest serving employee at AJ Metal Products in Brierley Hill, had to have part of his finger amputated, magistrates heard.

The firm admitted contravening health and safety laws by failing to ensure workers were protected from when using the machinery.

Victim, Ian Beech, who had protective gloves on, was feeding narrow steel rods through moving rollers when his right hand was dragged into the machine and trapped, said Ms Elizabeth Thomas, prosecuting on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive.

He was taken to hospital but doctors were unable to save his right index finger which was amputated after the incident on July 20, 2016.

The firm had had risk assessments carried out on two larger bending machines, which were more frequently used, but failed to include the smaller one in their appraisal, said Ms Thomas.

Crucial

"There was no need for people's hands to be up close to the rollers on the big machines – that was the crucial difference," she said.

A sign warning workers not to wear gloves when using the machine was not obvious, the court heard. It had been installed after a similar accident in 2013, although the injuries were less serious on that occasion.

Ms Thomas added that there were various safeguards that could have been put in place

Wolverhampton Magistrates Court heard the business in Bevan Road is a family firm with an 'exemplary' record of looking after its employees. Mr Beech has since returned to work at the company.

Apologising on behalf of the firm, Mr Peter Smith said: "This is a well-run company and lessons have been learned."

District judge Graham Wilkinson fined the company £23,300 and also ordered them to pay £1,900 costs.

Cafe backs Fizzogs' Hollywood bid

On the movie – The Fizzogs' Dancing Grannies with Paula Goodyear at the Dudley Fountain Arcade Café

A CAFE owner in Dudley has become a major sponsor for a Black Country comedy group bidding to become Hollywood stars.

Paula Goodyear from the Dudley Fountain Arcade Cafe has given her support to the Fizzogs' fundraising drive to develop a film script with writer-director Ben Field.

The 'Dancing Grannies' are raising money via a crowdfunding page to make a teaser tape to present to producers and investors in the film industry. So far they have generated more than £600 towards their £2,000 bid to catch the eye of Hollywood bigwig.

Paula backed the project after the theatre group filmed scenes at her cafe.

"I am sponsoring them because they are so down to earth and keeping it real Black Country. For them it's Black Country all the way to Hollywood."

The actresses who caused a sensation on the internet with the Dancing Grannies characters have also performed in New York's Times Square.

Their celebrity fans include racing driver Lewis Hamilton, who was pictured with them at the Bahrain Grand Prix.

Donations can be made at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/the-dancing-grannies-help-us-get-to-hollywood/

NEWS IN BRIEF

Biker menace at nature reserve

POLICE have stepped up patrols at a popular Black Country beauty spot following reports of off-road bikers causing a nuisance.

Officers have taken action at Fens Pools Nature Reserve in Pensnett to try and put a stop to the anti-social behaviour.

The area is popular with dog walkers and families and there have been increasing reports of off-road bikers causing problems in recent weeks.

Brierley Hill Police said on Twitter: "Neighbourhood officers are back on the Fens Pools Nature Reserve and surrounding areas again tackling the issue of off-road bikes."

Hit lock bottom at canal open day

A CANAL is being drained as part of an open day being held by the Canal & River Trust.

The public are being invited to see the depths of the Parkhead Locks in Dudley on Sunday, after it is drained so silt and debris can be removed.

The event is due to take place between 10am and 4pm at the locks off Duncan Edwards Way.

Entry is free and visitors will get to step down into the rarely seen and exposed canal chamber, as well as meet those who care for the network of canals.

Motown sounds for the soul fans

THE Ultimate Soul & Motown Night returns to Brierley Hall Civic Hall with DJ Big Reg tomorrow night (Friday), from 8pm to 1am.

Featuring screens with video DJ and a huge dancefloor, the night is run in conjunction with the Dudley Council For Voluntary Service with proceeds going to the charity.

Dancers can enjoy classic soul music and anyone who can't make it this weekend can attend a similar event on March 31 at the Bank Street venue.

Tickets are £5 from www.TicketSource.co.uk or £6 on the door

Fundraising fashion show for panto trip

A FASHION show is being held in Brierley Hill to raise money for Dudley's Operation Santa charity.

The aim of the event is to raise around £1,000 to treat 160 children to a night out at the pantomime during the next festive season.

The fashion show, which costs £5 per ticket, including welcome drink, will be at the Civic Hall in Bank Street on May 10 from 7pm with four themed catwalks.

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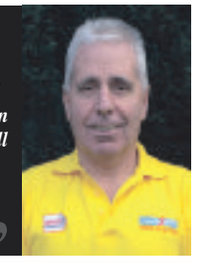

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Confession over my choice on TV viewing

WHILE searching through the multitude of television channels looking for anything, just anything that might be vaguely palatable to watch, I stumbled across a repeat of a Channel 4 series called It Was Alright In the 70s.

Now I know I'm probably a little behind the curve on this one, but I really don't watch much TV these days. There's just too many talent shows, celebrities-making-idiots-of-themselves shows, chat shows and never-ending gritty crime dramas about Sarah Lancashire mumbling into a shaky camera to make it worthwhile.

Anyway, for those not familiar with the format, It Was Alright in the 70s centres around paid-up members of the liberal elite, plus a handful of comedians no-one has ever heard of wearing loud shirts, repeatedly putting their head in their hands at the content of television made in the 1970s. The Sweeney, Carry On Films, Top of the Pops, all came in for a good kicking, along with various public safety information films which might be offensive to Generation Snowflake. Even an ATV news interview with Dave Hill from Slade was thrown in for some reason.

What amused me though is what the likely motives were of those who watched the show. Now I don't doubt for one moment that the people behind the programme thought it would be to hear David Aaronovitch's observations on how much more enlightened society has become compared to 40-odd years ago. But I can't help but think most just tuned in to see a few clips from Confessions of a Window Cleaner.

❒❒❒

RANK stupidity. Not fair to the fans. Nearly a fortnight later the tabloids are still having a field day about the escapades of West Bromwich Albion stars in Barcelona. What nobody has so far revealed is the make of the taxi they are alleged to have snaffled. Was it a Ford? Good chance, or maybe a Peugeot, VW, or Audi. I'll wager though that it was nothing with the Mercedes badge. No way. That's the one with three points.

❒❒❒

DONALD Trump has come in for stick for suggesting teachers should get paid extra if they carry pistols to protect pupils from gun maniacs.

Thankfully, that is probably not necessary here but it has given me an idea on tackling the menace of anti-social behaviour. Equip dinner ladies with Tasers, the little darlings will think twice about dropping litter and doing graffiti.

Problem with America is too many guns not too few

Jeremy Corbyn – I don't believe for a moment that he was any sort of spy

Detective Kip Glaspie (Carey Mulligan) a former Olympic pole vaulter. Really?

Haunted for days on end by name of Australian jockey, Scobie Breasley

Arming teachers is not the answer

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

BEFORE the bodies had even been buried after the Florida school massacre, some gun enthusiasts were claiming that, if only the teachers had been armed, the gunman could have been killed before he killed anyone. What hope can there be for people who genuinely believe that the problem is not that America has too many guns (last count about 300 million), but too few? And, hell, why stop with arming the teachers? The kids can only be truly safe when every dinner lady has a .44 Magnum. God Bless America.

DID we all notice in Endeavour (ITV) that Morse visited a motel called Crossroads in a village called Kings Oak and the cleaner was a Mrs T? Next week: mass murder in the village of Trumpton – six firemen and a miller in the frame.

UNDERSTANDING weather-related headlines. "Beast from the East brings Siberian snow-bomb nightmare" = It will be a tad chilly next week.

MATHS for beginners. A reader reports buying one item for £5 and another for £4. The shop assistant used a calculator to add them up.

ON Wednesday the BBC finally reported on the Corbyn/spy story. Even so, cynics will have noticed that the theme of Thought for the Day on the Today programme (Radio 4) was Silence is Golden. For me, the most disappointing moment of the Beeb's non-coverage of the story came when the Voice of America website asked: "Was Britain's Labour Leader a Communist Spy?" Was anyone else reminded of the 1936 Abdication Crisis when King Edward's affair with Mrs Simpson was the talk of American newspapers but British media conspired to hush it up? I don't believe for a moment that Corbyn was any sort of spy but we live in an age when people are called to account for their deeds of 20 or 30 years ago. If hindsight applies to ancient financial or sexual judgments, then why not political judgments, too?

NO surprises in this week's report in the Lancet linking heavy drinking with dementia; a pickled brain is never going to be a healthy brain. On the other hand, another report by scientists in California, also this week, suggests a couple of glasses of wine a day will help you live to see 90. I am reminded of a Scottish colleague who said this about whisky: "If we could just figure out how not to drink too little or too much, we'd live for ever." Research continues.

THE trouble with names is that they can become earworms. You hear them once and then cannot get them out of your mind. I recall one time when I was haunted for days on end by an Australian jockey. Scobie Breasley. Scobie Breasley. Scobie Breasley. Dammit. . . .

WHILE it's good to see academics supporting Briefings for Brexit, a website devoted to the unsung (some would say stifled) benefits of quitting the EU, they face an uphill battle. For this is not merely an argument about politics, economics or any other lecture-theatre subject. It goes deep into the human spirit. Just as some infants depend on a comfort blanket, so some adults need a catastrophe blanket. Their natural mind-set is to believe they are on the brink of Armageddon. I bet some of those panicking about Brexit were the ones who, over the years, have made themselves sick with worry about nuclear annihilation, DDT poisoning, the coming ice age (remember that?), global warming and, in the past few months, plastic pollution. The hugely intelligent men and women behind Briefings for Brexit may make a good case for quitting. But they will never turn pessimists into optimists.

EVERY fictional detective needs a back story, and the wackier the better. So we see tecs in wheelchairs or with a drink problem, suffering opium addiction, heavily pregnant, drop-dead glam or plump and mumsy, or even haunted by a dead partner. In the new BBC cop series Collateral, Detective Kip Glaspie (Carey Mulligan) turns out to have been a former Olympic pole vaulter before joining the police. Now, that's original. Goodness only knows how they'll work pole-vaulting into a storyline but I wouldn't mind betting that the final episode involves a chase, a high fence and a clothes prop. Why do I keep thinking of Norman Wisdom?

TALKING POINT

Cheers! Thank you for the music . . .

I WONDER how many people realise how blessed we are with live music venues in this area. I must admit it was not something I had actually considered until the other night.

We were at the Robin 2 in Bilston, a venue we love, to see the tribute group Jean Genie. We had seen them before. but always a testement to how good an act is if you want to see them again – and again.

Anyway I digress, when we were there watching the group a lovely lady next to me commented: "We are so lucky to have such music venues close at hand."

I thought of her words and yes she was right. Whatever your musical tastes there is something to suit. From jazz, rock, folk and soul, we are blessed.

I spoke to colleagues and they all reeled off groups they had seen at Wolverhampton's Civic and Slade Rooms over the years. The Civic has been closed for a refurb –and is now not due to reopen for some time – but has enjoyed a wealth of famous names over the years .

In its absence there are plenty of pubs around which give an audience to up-and-coming local bands. Nothing better then sitting in the pub, drink in hand, and listening to live music. Some may moan that they can't hear each other speak – easy answer to that, find somewhere else to drink!

Colleagues rattled off a number of venues that they have enjoyed over the years. Such as The Trumpet in Bilston, the nickname for The Royal Exchange. Jazz started in the late 50s-early 60s and can still be heard these days on a 'pay-what-you-like' basis.

Over to Aldridge and The Arena which holds live performances, covering the decades from the 1960s through to the present day and Cannock where regulars at The Station can enjoy live music.

In Wolverhampton smaller venues include The Slade Rooms, which replaced the much-missed Little Civic, and The Newhampton Arts Centre which hosts up-and-coming indie rock outfits and big names from the folk circuit.

Down the road and Birmingham offers a variety of gigs, ranging from the mega-stars at Birmingham and Genting Arenas, to an array of acts in the multiple rooms at the O2 Academy and Institute.

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Velo carbon footprint must have been huge

I SEE that Birmingham Council say that last year's Velo Birmingham cycle ride was a huge success.

This is hardly surprising since Birmingham undoubtedly made a lot of money from the participants.

The countless businesses, residents and visitors to the Black Country, Staffordshire and Worcestershire who suffered financial loss, or whose day was ruined by the associated road closures, would undoubtedly disagree.

After last year's event, I was told by Dudley Council that, before another Velo is approved, an impact assessment would be completed. I hope the results of this are duly noted.

In particular, its environmental impact would be interesting to see.

Apart from 15,000 cyclists travelling to and from Birmingham, a fleet of vehicles went out to deliver and collect the road-closure warning signs, then all the cones and barriers, followed by marshals driving out to enforce road closures on the day.

For an event claiming to support the green credentials of cycling, its carbon footprint must have been huge – and that is before you take into account the huge mileage that must have been covered by unfortunate people attempting to bypass the web of closed roads.

If Birmingham Council and the organisers wish to make Velo Birmingham a regular event, then let them keep it within Birmingham so that its disruption falls on Birmingham ratepayers and everyone else can get on with their lives without interference.

DAVID ANSCOMBE
Stourbridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Second class bus service

AM I the only one who believes we receive a second class bus service on the 120 route, especially between Oldbury interchange and Dudley.

I have complained to the bus company on numerous occasions.

Most weeks, they are late, often leave bus stops early (City Road/Portway Hill) and even their app on mobiles often delivers the wrong times.

Yesterday afternoon, the 120 was due in three minutes, then five then eight at this stop. The mangers must be aware of the problem and only began answering my complaints with brief written replies after I stated I may contact my MP or Andy Street.

When I lived in Halesowen, just over two years ago, the 9 bus to Stourbridge was rarely late.

Some of us won't tolerate this shoddy service indefinitely.

MRS MARY MARLOW
Darbys Hill Road

Thank you to nurse for help at roadside

ON February 16, at approximately 3.30pm, my husband was forced to stop his car whilst driving in Cot Lane, Wordsley, due to the fact I was feeling extremely ill.

I exited the car and was doubled over with pain. was also violently sick. In my distress, I noticed another car had pulled up behind my husband's car. A woman in a nurse's uniform exited the car and came over and gave me assistance and advice. It was not a pleasant situation for her to be in and there was no obligation for her to act. I would like to offer, on behalf of myself and my husband, our deepest gratitude and thanks for her unsolicited help and kindness.

JANET BAYLISS
Wall Heath

Time to get tough on homeless?

WHEN I was a youngster many years ago, it was a delight to go shopping around Dudley town with my mother.

There were all the top shops and also some lovely eating places where you could sample our local cuisine.

Turn forward the years and what do we have now?

No top shops but lots of charity shops, pound shops, bookies and, most of all, boarded-up shops, as well as run-down shops.

I also notice rubbish dumped in the main High Street along with bedding material strewn all around the town, also taking over many shop doorways.

Is it not time that the council and police get tough on the homeless people taking over the doorways and move them on from our poor, unrecognisable town?

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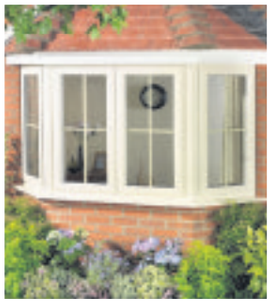

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Picture this! Artists showcase best work

Artists Rose Kudlacek, left, of Wolverhampton, and Christina Philpott, of Kingswinford, at Red House Glass Cone

THE work of almost 30 artists is be on show at an annual exhibition.

The Brierley Hill Society of Artists has returned to the Red House Glass Cone in Wordsley with its showcase, which runs until March 18.

It features watercolours, silk prints, oils, pastels, textiles, acrylics and lino prints including landscapes, portraits, still life and drawings. There are nearly 120 framed prints on display, plus 95 unframed prints and a total of 27 artists are represented.

Venice

Pieces include local scenes such as the cone itself, the Clent Hills, Black Country canals, as well as scenes from further afield including Venice.

Some of the most popular portraits with a local flavour include Sir Lenny Henry as well as Peaky Blinders favourite Tommy Shelby, played by Cillian Murphy.

All work is for sale with pieces available from £15 upwards.

There is also a small children's exhibition and the group hopes that this will grow as younger members join the group.

The Red House Glass Cone, on High Street, Wordsley, is open from 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday and 11am to 4pm at weekends. Admission is free to the art exhibition

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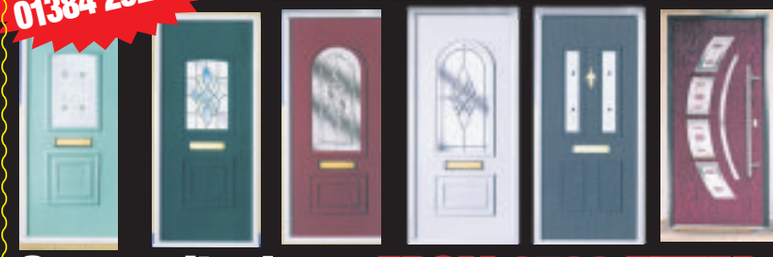

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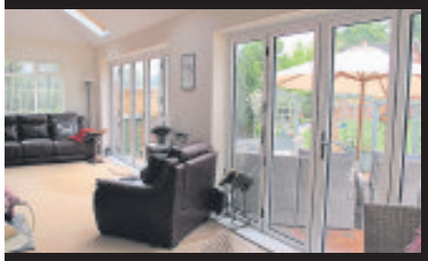

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Post Office branch is to reopen in village

KINVER'S Post Office will reopen in April after a campaign following its closure.

The branch, based on the High Street, was closed at the end of June following the resignation of its postmaster.

Since then village residents have had to travel to the next nearest branch at Potter's Cross which was nearly a mile away.

Recognising that local residents were disadvantaged as a result of the closure, the Post Office has announced that a branch will reopen on the High Street on Monday, April 16, at 1pm, following a public consultation process within the area, a move welcomed by Kinver's MP.

Co-operative

The new branch will operate at the Co-operative Food store on the High Street, which means it will have longer opening hours and will be open seven days a week.

South Staffordshire MP Gavin Williamson said: "I was really pleased to hear that the Post Office has decided to reopen the Kinver High Street branch.

"I know that residents will benefit from this decision and I am pleased that the High Street will once again have a post office."

Cannabis plants are found by police raid

It's like a jungle... police in major cannabis plant haul

ALMOST 200 cannabis plants were discovered following a police raid on an address in Dudley.

The plants were found at a property in the Dixon Green area, near Kates Hill, after police acted on intelligence provided by the community.

Officers shared the details of the find on social media site Twitter, posting: "198 Cannabis plants seized from address in Dixons Green area today by Sgt Turner and the NHT, with @FSU_WMP Dudley A unit.

"Local intelligence from members of the public really does help make these things possible so please report any suspicious activity."

The find was welcomed by St Thomas's ward councillor Shaukat Ali.

He said: "The police have been doing a really good job. They have come across a number of cannabis plants and found and destroyed them.

"Cannabis has a massive impact on the education of young people and ruins lives."

Police in witness appeal after crash

POLICE have launched an appeal for witnesses after a two-car crash near Halesowen.

West Mercia Police has appealed for people to come forward if they witnesses the accident near Hunnington last month, which saw two people taken to hospital.

A Vauxhall Vectra and a Honda CR-V were involved in a collision near the Bluebird Park on Bromsgrove Road.

The driver of the Honda, a man in his 40s, sustained serious head injuries. Police said the driver of the Vectra, a woman in her 50s, sustained minor injuries. The crash occurred at around 7pm on Monday February 19.

Investigating officers are now looking to speak to anyone who witnessed the crash, as well as the occupants of a vehicle which was believed to have been travelling in front of the Vectra.

Call West Mercia Police on the non-emergency number 101, quoting incident reference 560S of February 19.

£39m increase in profits for Merry Hill centre owner intu

PRE-TAX profits for the owners of Merry Hill shopping centre rose by nearly £40 million last year.

Intu Properties, the owners of intu Merry Hill, saw its pre-tax profits rise by £38.9m from £188.3m in 2016 to £227.2m.

The shopping centres group, which is in the midst of a merger with Hammerson, also reported revenue up from £594.3m to £616m and net rental income rising from £447m to £460m. After tax profits were up from £172m to £203m helped by a £47m revaluation surplus on its estate.

Intu invested £184m in the UK in 2017 and has a significant improvement project underway at intu Merry Hill, which is valued at £931m. In total it is investing £100m in the 1,671,000 sq ft centre, which has 217 stores, including £70m for improving the leisure provision to include a cinema and restaurants.

It will be spending £70m of the £100m up to 2020.

Intu's asset management director Julian Wilkinson said the spending would also now include upgrading the exterior of the Brierley Hill shopping centre including re-cladding.

Community forum for residents' views

THERE will be a chance for residents to air their views on a range of issues affecting them at a series of community meetings.

The forums, run by Dudley Council, will run throughout March and start on Monday.

The meetings on Monday are: Brierley Hill, Brockmoor and Pensnett Community Forum at Fens Pool Community Centre, Tennyson Street, Brierley Hill; Castle and Priory, St James's and St Thomas's Community Forum at DY1 Community Building, Stafford Street, Dudley. Both start at 6.30pm.

For more information, visit the Dudley Council website at www.dudley.gov.uk/community/community-council/community-forums/

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Lorry burst into flames on the M5

The lorry is pictured being engulfed by flames as fire-fighters battle to bring the blaze on the M5 under control

A LORRY burst into flames on the M5 leaving motorists facing up to two-miles of tailbacks near Halesowen.

Acrid smoke billowed across the carriageway as flames shot up from the stricken truck.

The fire happened on the M5 southbound between junction three at Halesowen and junction four at Lydiate Ash for north Bromsgrove. Crews from both Hereford and Worcester and West Midlands fire services were called at around 6.15am on Friday. All lanes on the southbound side were closed while traffic queued on the northbound carriageway. Images from Highways England showed flames shooting into the sky.

No-one was injured and the M5 was reopened southbound between junction three and junction four at around 10:45am. But two of the three lanes remained closed for recovery teams to dismantle the HGV. Delays were also reported on the A456 Manor Way in Halesowen as a result.

Man used freezer to hide illegal tobacco

A SHOPKEEPER who hid illegal tobacco inside a freezer and in drawers has been ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work.

By David Cosgrove

Sywash Mashkhaty, owner of European Food Express in Dudley High Street, pleaded guilty to seven offences.

Wolverhampton Magistrates Court heard that during an inspection in August 2016 trading standards officers found 1,765 packets of cigarettes and tobacco without the necessary health warnings, which had evaded excise duty. Five brands were also found to be counterfeit.

The haul was discovered hidden in drawers under a meat counter, inside a freezer cabinet and in a car parked at the rear of the premises.

The duty evaded was estimated to be more than £10,000.

Mashkhaty, 26, of Ryland Street, Birmingham, pleaded guilty to an offence under Tobacco and Related Products Regulations relating to the lack of health warnings, five offences under the Trade Marks Act relating to counterfeit products and one offence under the Proceeds of Crime Act in respect of possessing criminal property which had evaded duty. He was given a 12-month community order with 150 hours of unpaid work and ordered to pay £1,472 costs and a victim surcharge of £85.

Mashkhaty's employee and previous owner of the business Najibullah Asakzai, 24, pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting the offences. Asakzai, of Haig Road, Dudley, received a 12-month community order and a 12-month night curfew and was ordered to pay £1,652 costs and a victim surcharge of £85.

The tobacco was destroyed.

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www.qualitykitchenmakeoversltd.co.uk FIVE MINUTES FROM MERRY HILL

Paedophiles and rapists on loose – two for a decade

MORE than 50 convicted sex offenders from across the West Midlands are at large – including two who have now been on the run for more than a decade, according to official police figures.

Forces in the West Midlands, Staffordshire and West Mercia told our sister daily, the Express & Star, they do not know the whereabouts of 55 sex offenders. The figures include paedophiles and rapists and show the region has the second highest number of missing sex offenders in England.

Staffordshire Police has lost track of five sex offenders, while West Midlands Police said 46 had gone missing, with five going on the run since the start of this year.

West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police said four were at large, including one who has been missing for 11 years. West Midlands Police are also trying to track down a sex offender who disappeared in 2006.

Concerns

The figures, released under the Freedom of Information Act, have prompted concerns over child safety, with politicians on all sides urging police to redouble their efforts to snare registered sex offenders.

West Midlands Police refused to name those missing, insisting that doing so would 'breach a third party's data protection rights'.

Chief Inspector Nicola Court from West Midlands Police Integrated Offender Management Unit, said investigations were in place to trace all 46 missing offenders. Staffordshire Police said investigations were 'in place' to trace 'any individual that goes missing or doesn't comply with their reporting requirements'.

New track for the old tram fleet

THE original Midland Metro tram fleet has been sold for scrap – but two survivors are set for a new journey.

Thirteen Ansaldo T69 trams have been sold for £12,000 via an e-auction by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

However two from the fleet of 15 put up for sale have been found new homes. The first, Tram 7, has been donated to UK Tram, the British tram industry body.

The other, Tram 11, has been donated to Birmingham Museum. Tram 11 was repainted in the old Birmingham Corporation colours in 2013 to mark the 60th anniversary of the final tram running in the city.It is named after Councillor Theresa Stewart, the former leader of Birmingham City Council.

Spitfire and Hurricane to star at show

Second World War fighter aircraft, including a Spitfire and Hurricane, are the latest aircraft added to the list of attractions

ICONIC Second World War fighter aircraft, including a Spitfire and Hurricane, are the latest aircraft added to the list of attractions for this year's RAF Cosford Air Show.

Visitors to the event on June 10, which celebrates 100 years since the formation of the Royal Air Force, will witness aerial displays from an assortment of historic aircraft.

Organisers have announced that a rare Mk 1a version of the Supermarine Spitfire would be performing in the flying display, a first for the RAF Cosford Air Show.

This particular Spitfire, known by its registration N3200, fought during the Battle of France in 1940.

It was tasked to provide air support for the evacuation of Dunkirk. During combat with German fighters, N3200 was hit by a German aircraft and forced to land on the beach at Sangatte, and the pilot taken as a prisoner of war. The Spitfire remained on the beach, slowly buried in the sand, until 1986. The airframe was returned to the UK in 2000 and after a lengthy restoration flew again in 2014.

Spitfire N3200 recently starred in Christopher Nolan's critically acclaimed film Dunkirk thus repeating the true history of this aircraft.

It has been confirmed that a genuine Battle of Britain veteran Hawker Hurricane would be present airfield.

Police will work with vigilantes to catch perverts

OFFICERS will work with so-called paedophile hunters because any other move would 'lose in the court of public opinion', a police boss has said.

West Midlands Police's Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe made the announcement at the force's policing and crime strategic panel this week, while responding to a question asked over the vigilante groups.

It follows comments from the UK's lead police officer on child protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, who said forces would potentially work with the groups while also encouraging them to stop operating.

More than 44 per cent of cases of meeting a child following sexual grooming used vigilante group evidence in 2016, compared with 11 per cent two years before.

Ms Rolfe said: "We work very carefully adhere to the national guidelines set by Simon Bailey, national lead for child abuse investigations. But we're also mindful of losing in the court of public opinion if we decide we can't work with individuals who are going out of their way to identify those who may be putting children at risk.

"We will always want to hear from people who believe they have identified something but what we don't do is rely on them to undertake the investigations themselves.

"We work very carefully but we certainly don't reject or turn away people who are coming forward with information, well intentioned, that might enable us to protect victims and bring offenders to justice," she said.

Vigilante groups often trap suspected paedophiles by pretending to be a child online, before arranging to meet in a public place. The police are then called.

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Councillor in trouble over 'imbeciles' jibe

SEDGLEY councillor Bill Etheridge is facing a Dudley Council ethics committee over claims he made 'derogatory, disrespectful, threatening and inflammatory' comments about Labour councillors.

Mr Etheridge, who is also a West Midlands Ukip Euro MP, is alleged to have breached the council's code of conduct for comments he made in videos on his Facebook page last year.

In the videos, uploaded following a council meeting, he described the Labour group as a 'procession of imbeciles', labelling them 'Socialist do-gooder bleeding heart Communist rat bags' and 'pathetic tin pot nobodies'.

He also referred to the authority's 'crony Mayor in his Dick Whittington outfit', and suggested it would be best for the people of Dudley if the Council House was demolished with all the councillors inside it.

The complaint against him was submitted by Labour group leader, Councillor Pete Lowe, and followed an intervention from the Rev Graham Usher, the Bishop of Dudley, who called on Mr Etheridge to apologise.

It prompted an independent investigation by John Austin, who concluded that the councillor had breached the members' code of conduct.

He said Councillor Etheridge failed to value colleagues and 'engage with them in an appropriate manner'; treat people with respect; and showed disrespect towards the Mayor, Councillor Dave Tyler.

He accepted Mr Etheridge's 'ill chosen' comments about the Council House being demolished had been 'tongue in cheek'.

Councillor Etheridge insists that he stands by every word he said in the videos.

He dubbed this week's hearing a 'kangaroo court' and said he would not be attending it.

Bill Etheridge faces ethics inquiry over claims he made 'derogatory, disrespectful, threatening' comments

Eye campaigner meets minister in move to extend drug

EYE health campaigner Elaine Shaw has met Health Minister Steve Brine to push for Government action on vital sight-saving treatment for patients in England.

Elaine, who suffers from the rare eye condition Myopic CNV, will press for action as she seeks quicker treatment access to prevent blindness. Dudley North MP Ian Austin has also backed her campaign.

Those suffering from Myopic CNV are usually prescribed a drug called Lucentis, but the eyes often stop responding after repeated injections and patients have to switch to another drug, Eyelea.

Currently, this is immediately available in Scotland and Wales, but not in England.

Elaine, 58, from Dudley, said: "I know that delays in accessing sight-saving treatment are still happening and we need to tackle the causes so that we can stop this needless loss of sight once and for all."

Mr Austin has previously raised the issue in Parliament. He said: "I was appalled to discover that people in her position were being denied quick treatment that could save their sight.

"I've been campaigning to get these drugs made available and I'm pleased that Elaine met with Steve Brine so she could tell him about her campaign."

Pensions watchdog in Carillion cash probe

THE PENSIONS Regulator is considering using its powers to recover cash for Carillion's debt-stricken pension schemes, MPs have been told.

Bosses from the regulator appeared before a joint select committee inquiry into the Wolverhampton-based firm, which went into liquidation in January with debts approaching £1.5 billion.

By Pete Madeley

The regulator said its 'anti-avoidance' probe – launched last month – was looking at whether there was a case for using its powers to recover cash for pensioners.

It came as Barclays – one of the Carillion's major lenders – announced it had taken a £127m hit as a result of the firm's collapse.

Carillion's pension schemes have an estimated £900m shortfall.

Members of the Work and Pensions and Business Committees asked what could be retrieved for the schemes.

Nicola Parish, executive director of regulation, said its powers could go beyond seeking recoveries from companies. "It [the powers] can look at individuals associated and connected with corporates as well," said Ms Parish.

She was asked by Frank Field, chair of the Work and Pensions select committee, if she was looking at those who had 'made a lot of money out of this company... the top gang?'

"We are looking at all avenues for the use of our powers, yes," responded Ms Parish.

Ms Parish said the regulator was working on its investigation with other agencies, including the Financial Reporting Council, the Insolvency Service and the Financial Conduct Authority.

When asked by Mr Field if the regulator had its finger in anyone's collar she said: "If fingering their collar means are we pursuing an investigation and looking into the activities of all the parties concerned to see what the all of the possibilities are for the use of our powers are, yes we are."

Meanwhile, another 230 Carillion workers are set to lose their jobs this week as the liquidation of the construction and services giant continues. It brings to 1,371 the total so far who have been made redundant since the collapse of the group in January.

Work has also ground to a halt on projects, including Sandwell's new 'super hospital'.

Anthem choir show

A CHOIR is celebrating its second anniversary, and recruiting for a summer show in Sedgley.

Anthem Voices, based in Wednesfield, has more than 60 members. It offers two community choirs. Last year Anthem had a sell-out charity concert raising more than £1,000 go to the Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The summer show is at Sedgley's Dormston Mill Theatre on June 15. Call 07849255226.

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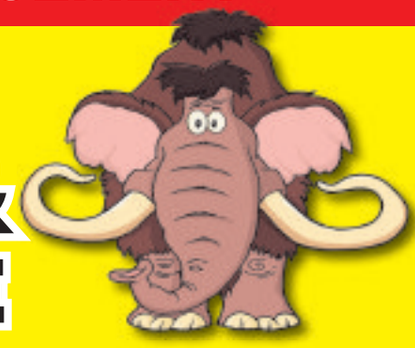

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TV comics headline new festival at pub venue

MOST will know him as The Sinnerman on ITV teatime quiz show The Chase.

But this summer comedy fans will get the chance to see Paul Sinha in an entirely different light, as a stand-up comedian.

The Sinnerman will appear alongside TV comic Seann Walsh, as well as 11 other professional comedy acts, as part of the Fitz Fest in Stourbridge this June.

The inaugural comedy festival at Katie Fitzgerald's pub in Wollaston, where a marquee has become a popular venue for some of the nation's top up-and-coming comics, is being held from June 7 to 10.

Sinha will headline the festival's opening night and Walsh, who has appeared on Live At The Apollo and Mock The Week, will top the bill on the closing night.

Housewife

The two other headline slots will be filled by Barbara Nice, the housewife character creation of Phoenix Nights star Janice Connolly, and popular Black Country comic Jonny Cole. They will headline Friday and Saturday night respectively.

The four-day extravaganza is being put on by organisers of the pub's monthly award-winning Fitz of Laughter Comedy Club.

Dudley comic Wayne Beese, who is resident compere at the club, said: "We're really excited about this. "I've gigged recently with both Paul Sinha and Seann Walsh and both were world class, they really are comics at the top of their game.

"They normally play on the big stages so this is a rare chance to see them in a really intimate 100-seater venue on your doorstep.

Paul Sinha from The Chase

Seann Walsh from Mock The Week

"Barbara and Jonny are two of the most popular acts we've had here since we started. When we put them on they always sell out and quickly, and that's because they are superb comics as well who know how to put on a show.

"On top of those four, we've got a really good mix of comics supporting them, from seasoned circuit professionals to hotly-tipped up and comers.

"They will be four amazing nights, and if we can fill the marquee and get it rocking for the whole weekend then who knows, it could become an annual thing."

The comedy club has been running for nearly four years and put on a host of star stand-up names including Joe Lycett, Tom Stade, Hal Cruttenden and Gary Delaney.

Tickets for Fitz Fest cost £15 per show plus booking fees with special offers available for those buying weekend tickets. Details and tickets are available from www.skiddle.com/e/13150821

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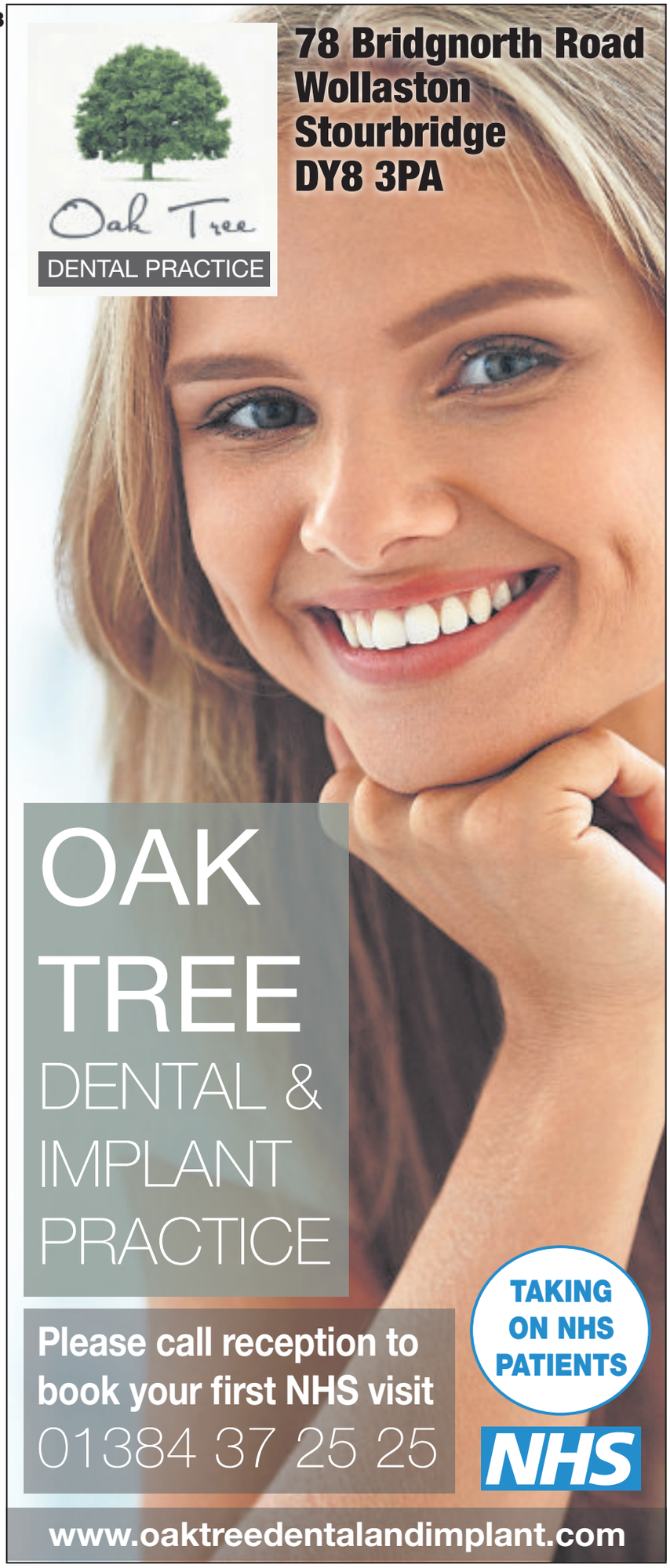

Possessive ex is jailed after horror car crash

A BULLYING boyfriend whose bid to escape police came within inches of disaster has been jailed for two years.

Horrified Rebecca Weston was on the pavement in Church Road, Bilston, having a phone conversation with her mother when she saw the Peugeot hurtling towards her on its side, a judge heard.

Miss Weston later told police: "If I had not run out of the way I would have been struck by him. I was ver lucky."

The car came to a standstill with its wheels facing the front of the store. Police, who had just abandoned the pursuit because it was getting too dangerous, went to the aid of driver, Aniel Landa, who kneed one of the officers in the face, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Smoke

Mr Timothy Sapwell, prosecuting, said: "They saw smoke coming from the car, smashed a window in the vehicle and pulled the defendant out but whilst being restrained he assaulted an officer."

Landa, aged 22, had broken the terms of a restraining order banning contact with his former partner hours after being freed from jail where he had been serving a sentence for biting and attempting to strangle her, the court heard.

She went to spend the night at the home of a relative in Wednesfield but Landa was on the doorstep the next morning.

He tricked her into getting into his car by offering her a lift home to get a change of clothes but headed for an industrial estate in Hickman Avenue, Moseley, where he stopped and pulled her hair to stop her fleeing.

The car ploughing into the front of a shop, causing £1,000 damage

But she finally broke free and ran to East Park where she was shielded by two council workers, forcing the defendant to circle the park waiting for her to leave. He was spotted by police called to the scene, triggering the pursuit.

Landa broke the speed limit, went through two sets of red lights, and drove both the wrong way round a traffic island and on the opposite side of the road, forcing other motorists to brake and take evasive action, continued Mr Sapwell. Mr Scott Coughtrie, defending, conceded: "It is more by luck than judgment that he is not facing far more serious offences.

"This has had a profound effect on him and he has now come to terms with the fact the relationship is over."

Landa, of Constantine Way, Bilston, pleaded guilty to dangerous driving, assaulting a Pc and breaching a restraining order.

Off-duty firefighter leads volcano rescue

A WOMAN who fell 130-feet into the crater of an active volcano was carried to safety in a dramatic rescue operation co-ordinated by a back-packing firefighter from Birmingham.

John Conway, who was on holiday on the Indonesian island of Bali, was on an early-morning trek to the top of Mount Batur when the drama unfolded.

The firefighter, aged 33, was recovering from the ascent and preparing to enjoy the spectacular views when he heard that the woman had fallen from a viewing platform into the crater.

Speaking from the island, he said: "I explained I was a firefighter and trauma-trained, and directed down into the crater where there were about four or five other people already with the woman. She was clearly in a very bad way. She was bleeding a lot and turning blue.

Tissues

"I found out there was no air ambulance and the first aid supplies were really poor. All I had to use were some wet wipes, tissues and tape."

He worked for around 30 minutes to stem the woman's bleeding before being joined in the crater by a nurse who was also on the trek. He also asked people to take off their shirts and coats to keep the casualty warm, and kept pinching her arm to keep her conscious.

Other trekkers then helped to form a human chain, using a stretcher fetched from further down the volcano to raise the injured woman out of the crater.

They then faced a race against time to get the patient to an ambulance at the bottom of the 5,600ft volcano, taking it in turns in groups to carry her.

Mr Conway said: "She was obviously in severe pain and the nurse and I were worried she might have spinal injuries but she never once complained."

Birmingham firefighter John Conway

Mount Batur on Bali, part of Indonesia

Trekkers help to carry the injured woman down the volcano

After five hours, they reached the ambulance – an estate car with just a driver and no paramedics – and learned that the nearest hospital was another two hours away.

The firefighter, from Highgate Station, accompanied her, crouched in the back of the vehicle until they got to the hospital. The woman's injuries included several broken bones and ribs, a fractured spine, a serious head injury and a broken nose.

Mr Conway said: "Given the state in which we found her, and the extent of her injuries, it's a miracle she survived."

His watch commander Chris Gauntlett praised his remarkable actions.

"I'm not at all surprised to hear that he did everything he could to help this young woman.

"All of our firefighters are trauma-trained, and John is among those who take part in competitive challenges against other fire stations and brigades to hone their skills. It sounds like he certainly put those skills into practice and has proved that we're never really off duty, even on holiday."

The Doc says Duncan was the greatest of them all

Alex Stepney, Graham Williams, Jim Cadman and Tommy Docherty at the Duncan Edwards exhibition at Dudley Archives

FOOTBALLING legend Tommy Docherty paid tribute to Duncan Edwards at an exhibition in Dudley on the 60th anniversary of his death.

The former Wolves and Villa manager said he was delighted to join fellow football veterans Alex Stepney (Manchester United goalkeeper) and Graham Williams (West Bromwich Albion) to remember – in his own words – 'the greatest of them all'.

Now 89-years-old, The Doc proudly stood up in front of a packed audience at Dudley Archives centre to recount his fondest memories of 'Black Country boy' Duncan, who died aged 21.

The pair had played against each other in Duncan's international debut for England in April 1955 against Scotland at Wembley Stadium.

The Doc said: "Duncan was outstanding. So much skill and strength and at 18 he was the finished article, a complete player. I feel even to this day he was world class. You don't realise what a tragedy it is for his family, his club, for the boy and for the country."

The visit came as Dudley Council revealed it is to launch an annual Duncan Edwards Day on October 1 – the birthday date for the former Manchester United and England player, who died from injuries sustained in the Munich Air Disaster.

Docherty, who went on to manage Manchester United, said: "You can keep all your Bests, Peles and Maradonas, Duncan Edwards was the greatest of them all."

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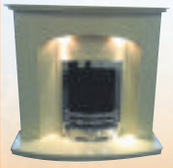

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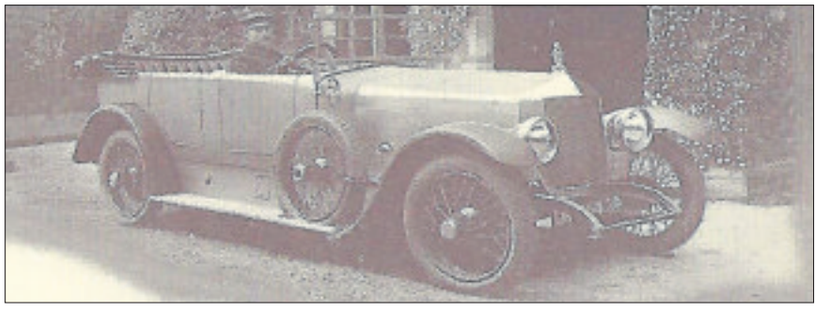
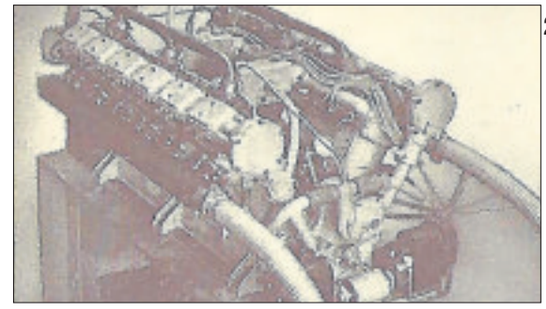
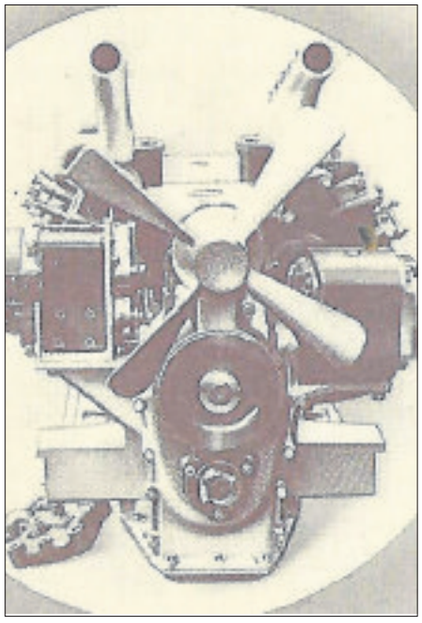


After the war Guy went into production with one of the first V8 cars

Sydney S Guy



The V12 Guy aero engine



The post War Guy V8 car engine

How Dragonfly orders took massive nosedive

MEMORY LANE

By Alec Brew

DID Guy Motors produce their own V12 aero-engine at the end of the First World War ? It seems a simple question but also seems to be something of a mystery.

Sydney Guy was Works Manager at the Sunbeam Motor Car Company before the First World War, when they were producing their first V8 and V12 aero engines.

On May 30, 1914 he resigned, and on the same day registered a new company, Guy Motors, and built a factory on the other side of town, and by September was producing 30 cwt lorries.

During the War the Ministry of Munitions took over the factory with orders for military supplies like the fuses for depth charges.

Then in April 1918 Guy received a contract for 12 seven cylinder 150 hp ABC Wasp radial aero engines, and also for one experimental 320 hp 9 cylinder ABC Dragonfly engine. The Dragonfly, on paper, seemed a war-winning engine, giving high power for only 662 lbs dry weight, and soon the Ministry were ordering it by the thousand from 11 different manufacturers, and planning a whole phalanx of aircraft for it to power.

Experimental

Guy Motors built their first experimental one in the short time of only 24 days from first machining to test run. With the order for 12 Wasp engines 90 per cent complete, Guy were then told to turn them over for completion to another company and were given an order for 600 of the high priority Dragonflies.

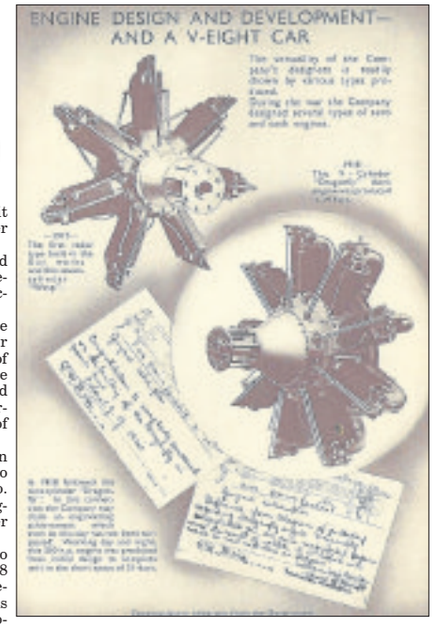
It was here that troubles began as the Dragonfly turned out to be an awful engine. In the air it overheated, with the cylinders often running cherry red, and vibrated so badly it started to shake itself to pieces after just a few hours running.

The problems were never fixed and orders were cancelled wholesale, before Guy produced their first production example.

Now it has been said that at the end of the war Guy had built their own V12 aero engine, and a couple of images of it have surfaced, but at the time no Company was allowed to build an aero-engine without Ministry permission, and there are no records of permission even being sought.

Sydney Guy was not the sort of man who would allow others to dictate to him what he could and could not do. Did he take a look at the awful Dragonfly and decide he could do better himself ?

After the war he quickly went into production with one of the first V8 cars, but what happened to the aero-engine, and have any other details survived beyond a couple of photographs ?



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£100m fund to boost the small businesses

THE Government has signed off on the latest wave of a £250 million investment fund to boost small businesses across the Midlands.

Up to £100m in equity finance has been committed through the British Business Bank (BBB), with the cash earmarked to accelerate economic growth and promote job creation through the region's small businesses.

Ministers say it will broaden the funding options and opportunities available to Midlands firms. It forms part of the Government's Midlands Engine Strategy and follows a £120m debt and small business loans funding pot launched last August.

Announcing the funding, Housing Secretary and Ministerial Champion for the Midlands Engine, Sajid Javid, said: "The Midlands Engine already boasts over 14 per cent of the UK's high-growth businesses and its economy is worth more than £230 billion.

Potential

"We want to harness its huge potential and help give small firms across the Midlands that much-needed boost to grow their business. Ensuring every part of the UK can play to its strengths and spread prosperity is central to our Industrial Strategy, and this fund will not only generate jobs to benefit the entire Midlands but, ultimately, the British economy."

Patrick Magee, the BBB's chief commercial officer, said:"We believe there is a major opportunity to increase the supply of equity finance in the Midlands."

The funding project is backed by the European Union using funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

Talented? Let your Voice do the talking

WANNABE pop stars can put their singing skills to the test when The Voice auditions return to the Black Country.

The TV singing contest's first stage will be held at the Cuban Exchange in Exchange Street, Wolverhampton on on Wednesday (7).

Bosses are looking for top talent from across the country

Successful entrants from the Black Country and Staffordshire will be following in the footsteps of Jason Jones, who reached the semi-finals of the last edition of the show.

Wowed

Jason, from Burntwood, works at the RAC Call Centre off the M6 in Wednesbury. He wowed judges with his opening performance of Zayn's Pillowtalk and made it all the way to the final eight before being eliminated.

The Voice's latest advert says: "Do you think you've got what it takes to turn a chair?

"We are on the lookout for incredible singing solo artists and duos for The Voice 2019. If you want your Voice to be heard, come and see us."

People attending the auditions in Wolverhampton are asked to prepare one or two songs with a backing track, an instrument or acapella.

The event is only open for over 18s. To book a slot email bashfunk@gmail.com

Uni drone course is due to take off

DRONE pilot courses are taking off after a university signed a deal to deliver training over the next two years.

The University of Wolverhampton will be offering one of the first courses of its kind with ex-military aviation personnel offering the training.

The Remote Pilot Certificate SUAS course, which is Civil Aviation Authority approved, leads to Permission for Commercial Operations status.

Companies are eager to book up seats at inaugural Black Country Business Festival

Report by John Corser

More than 100 events have been confirmed for the first Black Country Business Festival taking place from April 23 to May 4.

Developed by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce, it aims to help Black Country businesses to make new connections, create new opportunities and learn from each other to help their development.

It is also hoped it will put the region in the national spotlight through the wide variety of interesting and exciting events.

Attendance during the fortnight is anticipated to top 7,000, with 15 per cent of these being from outside the region.

During the festival, events are being staged by local businesses and will include seminars, lectures, workshops, large trade shows and conferences covering a wide variety of business topics both within the festival's nine key sectors and beyond.

There are events taking place in all corners of the Black Country from prisons, an army reserve centre, theatres and casinos to golf clubs, football stadiums and hotels.

Nearly every event is completely free to attend, but tickets do need to be booked in advance. These are available on the Black Country Business Festival website on a first come first served basis.

Business festival sponsor, Talbots Law, is running several events – one of which involves top legal services advisor Mitch Kowalski, who is flying in especially from Canada to speak at 2030 – A Completely New World for Professional Services Firms on April 26.

Corin Crane, chief executive of the Black Country Chamber said: "It makes me really proud that so many Black Country businesses have got on board with the business festival. Over 100 events in our first year is awesome! The programme is looking really comprehensive."

The Black Country Business Festival is partnered by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and DY5 – Dudley's Business and Innovation Enterprise Zone. It is also supported by the following organisations which all understand its importance and relevance and want to contribute to its success: Cox & Plant, Federation of Small Businesses, Ramada Park Hall Hotel, University of Wolverhampton, Talbots Law, Wolverhampton Racecourse, Casino 36, Express & Star, Midlands in Business and Signal 107.

To book tickets visit www.blackcountrybusinessfestival.com or email hello@blackcountrybusinessfestival.com or call 01902 912304.

Book is bostin' effort to preserve spakin' proppa

IT is a bostin' guide to how we spake – the world's first Black Country dictionary has been published.

And the man who has compiled it hopes future generations will study the language in schools.

The guide has been put together by Steve Edwards, one of the organisers of the Black Country Festival.

It is on sale on Amazon and people can also buy the dictionary at the Black Country Living Museum.

Steve, who was born in Brierley Hill and now lives in Dudley, is fighting to keep the language alive.

The former factory worker has uncovered some rare terms by speaking to older people from across the region.

Some of the terms were on the brink of extinction.

Steve said: "A lot of people were getting in touch with me people of the Black Country Festival stuff and saying they wanted a dictionary.

"I grew up in a proper Black Country family so thought I would be able to do it.

"The whole country is becoming Londonised and this is a way of trying to save and preserve the Black Country dialect.

Understanding

"We need people to know that we still speak Black Country around here, it's not just the Queen's English."

In order to compile the dictionary Steve spoke to relatives and pensioners from across the region to double check the words he knew with other people's understanding of them.

Steve explained: "I have been speaking to a lot of people to make sure I was getting the words right.

"I also wanted to see if there were any new words or sayings.

"Most of them I kind of knew because I had grown up with two proper Black Country grandparents so this was something I was brought up with."

The Black Country dialect should be treated as its own separate language within the region's schools, Steve said.

He suggested pupils should be taught the language alongside subjects such as French or German.

This will give them an insight into their own history and culture, he insisted.

He added: "That's how it needs to be looked at. People say we speak slang and we don't speak properly.

"But that's not right – our dialect is actually derived from early English, it's the original form.

"It is just that we retained it rather than change it to the Queen's English.

"I think it definitely should be taught in school, it would be just like teaching French or German.

"It has national and international importance because it is one of the only surviving original forms of English still being used.

"We need to preserve the language and also teach it for the future generations as well."

The dictionary runs from A to Z – with entries for every letter of the alphabet. There is also a brief history of the Black Country dialect and the region as a whole.

Steve, aged 34, said: "In the book the first page tells people about the Black Country and why it is called what it is.

"Then it goes on to our dialect and where it's derived from, as well as phrases and different words. It is educational because a lot of people don't know these things. It's just how English used to be.

"In the book there are the words but also a selection of phrases – all together there's 45 pages in it."

'Zonked'

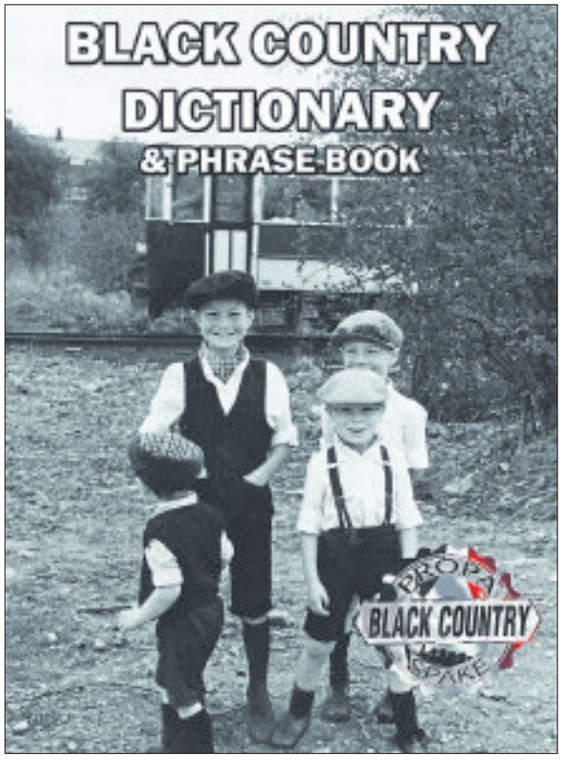
The final entry is 'zonked' – meaning tired. Other interesting words and phrases include 'bibble' – a small stone or a pebble; 'loon' – alone; 'clammed' – hungry; 'me babby's blartin' – meaning my baby's crying; or 'wasin' – throat. A surprising addition was one phrase Steve had not heard until he began researching the book.

This is 'Ode Ear's Night' – the Black Country version of New Year's Eve.

Steve explained: "Somebody told me that but I wasn't sure if I believed them. But I went up to my nan and asked my father as well and they said the same thing."

People can pick up the dictionary online, at the museum and also at the Black Country T-Shirts shop in Castle Street, Dudley.

Next week it will also go on sale at Dudley Council venues, including the Red House Glass Cone and Dudley Archives.



The dictionary is aimed at 'keeping the language alive'

Black Country Dictionary author Steve Edwards

People can buy the book at the Black Country Living Museum

City on target for £10m bonus if Wolves promoted

PROMOTION to the Premier League for Wolves could generate £10 million a year for Wolverhampton's economy, says a football finance expert.

Dr Daniel Plumley, a senior lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, whose areas of expertise is the economics and finance of professional team sports, says although the main benefactors of promotion will be the football club, there are knock-on effects for the city.

"In terms of an exact figure it's difficult to pinpoint but the ballpark estimates are around £10m across the course of a season," Dr Plumley said.

"That's primarily attributed to out-of-town visitors linked to away fans. Playing in a bigger competition, bigger clubs and more supporters come to the city and spend money on match days, which will benefit local businesses."

As well as generating a feel-good factor within the city, promotion would also open Wolverhampton to a whole new global audience, the expert announced.

"If you look at the Premier League as a product and focus on broadcasting, it's distributed to around 200 countries worldwide," he says

"There is certainly a sense of putting a club in a different shop window from an appeal perspective. More will follow Premier League football than they will the Championship."

The club itself would earn a whopping £120m from promotion at a minimum, according to Dr Plumley's calculations. He said: "We're looking at a minimum of £120m based on the current figures. If you take Sunderland from last season, they earned just shy of £100m from broadcasting revenue alone."

Wolves are currently top of the Championship but the gap between them and the second and third places has been reduced.

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It's an age-old tale of fun for Quartet

It has an all-star cast. Quartet features Paul Nicholas, Wendi Peters, Sue Holderness and Jeff Rawle and tells the charming tale of four ageing opera singers. The show, which opens at Birmingham's REP on Tuesday and runs until March 10, tells the story of Cecily, Reggie and Wilfred, who reside in a magnificent retirement home in Kent.

The rumour circling the halls is that the home is soon to play host to a new resident. Word is, it's a star. Jean arrives and old rivalries resurface, secrets are revealed and chaos unfolds, but in true theatrical tradition - the show must go on.

Paul Nicholas is best known for his work in The Real Marigold Hotel and Just Good Friends, Wendi Peters starred in Coronation Street and Oh What A Lovely War!, Sue Holderness played Marlene in Only Fools and Horses and The Green Green Grass while Jeff Rawle became a household name in Harry Potter and Drop The Dead Donkey.

Their work in the new revival of the bitter-sweet comedy has dazzled critics. Quartet was created by the Oscar-winning writer Sir Ronald Harwood and is a celebration of the twilight years and the hilarity of growing old disgracefully.

The character who causes the disruption at the Kentish retirement home is played by Sue Holderness, who featured alongside Boycie in Only Fools and Horses.

Grey area – Quartet is set in a retirement home in Kent

GENERATION

She says: "My character in Quartet, Jean Horton, was a major star in the world of opera. In her heyday she was known as one of the finest sopranos of her generation. She retired very early, apparently to settle down and spend time with her children.

"We discover during the play that there was rather more to it than that. She is a diva. She still thinks of herself as a major star and expects all those around her to jump to her every whim. She's really rather a monster – so thrilling to play.

"The four characters are very different and seeing them interacting is great fun. Ronald Harwood is the most wonderful writer. I've been blessed in my career to be offered roles written by some of the very finest writers – Alan Ayckbourn, George Bernard Shaw, Terence Rattigan and, of course, the genius John Sullivan. Ronald Harwood is up there with the best of them."

She relates to the play because it focuses on the ageing process. "You ask me to give advice about the hilarity of growing old! Much of it isn't hilarious at all. Bits of you start to creak and the memory goes walkabout. My character in this is waiting for a new hip and is in constant pain, which probably accounts for some of her grumpiness. But my advice would simply be to keep going. Walk a lot, eat well and laugh. Laughter really is the best medicine – so come and see Quartet."

Actor Paul Nicholas has been enjoying working with his fellow cast and is happy to be on the road.

"It helps that we're playing old people, other than Wendi who's a child. If you're working with slightly more mature actors they've been there and done it all, so it's a bit more easy-going."

He was looking for a role that reflected on growing old and was delighted when he stumbled upon Quartet.

"I was looking to do something for an older guy and I came across this play. I thought it was excellent and very well written. It's a very good comment on what it's like to be older, especially as an older performer – the difficulties, the fun, the various moods and things that become apparent when you get older.

"There's one great line 'we don't actually change, I'm still the same person'. It's true, we do basically stay the same. I try to anyway. Every so often you get a job that makes you think 'that's really good', and this is one of those occasions.

"When people come to see it, particularly older people, will recognise things that happen. It sounds awful but it's actually quite funny. As long as you can keep your sense of humour above anything, you're OK. Being old can be very enjoyable and you can still have a lot of fun."

Wendi Peters has enjoyed being on the road since leaving Coronation Street, where she played Cilla Battersby-Brown.

"I think it's going to be a lovely tour; we go to really lovely venues. I think it's going to be a lovely, sedate tour with lots of cups of tea, lots of sightseeing… as well as doing the play in beautiful theatres.

> *Being old can be very enjoyable and you can still have a lot of fun*

"I saw the film when it first came out and again when we started rehearsals; I was pleasantly surprised at how different they are. The film is beautiful and very gentle . . . the play is outright funny!

"We're laughing at bits ourselves, and we had a select audience the other day and were thrilled at how much they were laughing out loud. There probably isn't a page of dialogue that goes by without a big laugh."

Jeff Rawle, meanwhile, thinks the comedy is touching. "It's very funny because the whole point is that they're ageing opera singers who were successful in their day so they're all highly individual and eccentric people, all together in various states of decay. In some ways, they're starting to return to their childhoods and their past has become very important to them.

"I think people living with older parents, or who are getting old themselves, will recognise the traits – but they're dealt with great humour. It's very well written."

Andy Richardson

● **For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.**

The Pale Waves

On crest of the Waves

Breakthrough band Pale Waves are riding the crest of success with tour dates selling out as the My Obsession quartet prepare to play for a full house at Birmingham's O2 Academy 3 tomorrow night (Friday).

This month the Kohl-eyed indie pop outfit formed at Manchester University are more than living up to the 'next big thing' status afforded by the BBC Sound of 2018 listing and NME Under the Radar award. This month they release The Tide, a new track from their forthcoming All The Things I Never Said EP, a follow up to their singles My Obsession and New Year's Eve.

Everything Everything have further refined their jittery angular take on indie rock with fourth album A Fever Dream, again distinctive due to the soaring vocals of Jonathan Higgs, and they will be in concert at the O2 Academy on Saturday.

The Modfather himself, Paul Weller, former The Jam and Style Council frontman and a solo success for 26 years, is in concert at the Genting Arena tomorrow with songs from across his 40-year career including 13th studio album A Kind Of Revolution. The Strypes support. Then on Saturday the Genting hosts the pride of Ramsbottom, Elbow, as Guy Garvey and co bring their Little Fictions tour with more majestic melancholy rock.

Leeds outfit Hookworms bring their electro-psych-pop, as heard on the new Microshift album, to the Hare and Hounds in Kings Heath on Sunday and international eight-piece Superorganism, who have released brilliant pop track Everybody Wants To Be Famous, showcase their self-titled debut album at the O2 Institute in Digbeth on Monday.

Gwenno brings her Cornish psychedelic folk to the Hare and Hounds next Thursday (March 8), the same night reactivated synth pop legends Blancmange play the venue's other room.

Great entertainer in his price range

THERE was a brilliant moment at The Royal Variety Performance when Brian Conley was standing on stage with his old mate Bradley Walsh.

"I'm going to do an impression," Brian said. "This is Bradley Walsh." He faced away from the audience at the London Palladium and as Bradley looked on, none the wiser, Brian wrapped cellotape around his face so that his nose was squashed and his eyes wrinkled. He turned to face the audience, aped his mate's accent and stood right next to him.

"I'm Bradley." The audience roared. And then he started to jog across the stage. Bradley looked at Brian, jaw dropping somewhere near the floor.

"What are you doing, Brian."

"The Chase."

Boom.

Conley has been entertaining people for 45 years, having got his first paying gig at the age of 12.

During that time, he's made five Royal Variety Performance appearances and been the lead in such musicals as Me and My Girl, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Hairspray, Oliver!, The Music Man, Barnum and Jolson for which he was nominated for an Olivier Award.

He's also won a raft of TV awards and a British Comedy Award.

He's not done badly for a kid who was in the remedial class at school.

He's on the road again with his one-man show. It's called Brian Conley – Still The Greatest Entertainer In His Price Range, a typically self-deprecating title.

The show is at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre on March 10 and he's added a matinee because the evening show is almost sold out. He will also be at Lichfield Garrick on April 6 and Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre on May 13.

Pokey around in American sounds

Retro Americana drawing on blues and western swing comes to Birmingham's O2 Institute on Wednesday when Missouri's Pokey LaFarge makes a rare Midlands appearance. Born Andrew Heissler and nicknamed Pokey as a child, LaFarge first caught the eye and ear in the UK when his old time sound and look was showcased on TV by Jools Holland, performing the La La Blues and Drinkin' Whiskey. He has released eight albums, the most recent being Manic Revelations.

Changing wombs with mirth and music

Former EastEnders star Cheryl Fergison will join Maureen Nolan, Casualty's Rebecca Wheatley and comedienne Hilary O'Neil in Menopause The Musical at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre – an all-singing all-dancing comedy that's likely to bring you out in a hot flush! The show is set in a department store where four women with seemingly nothing in common meet by chance and make fun of their lives experiencing 'The Change'. The production is even sponsored by a health supplement for ladies of a certain age.

Packed with one-liners and lots of classic pop tunes, Menopause The Musical is at the Lichfield Street theatre for one night on Monday. See grandtheatre.co.uk or call 01902 429212.

It will also be at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham on April 28.

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We look forward to seeing you soon!

SATURDAY'S TV MARCH 3

CHOICE

Pamela Anderson

Piers Morgan's Life Stories (ITV, 9.50pm)
The host interviews former Baywatch star and Playboy centrefold Pamela Anderson, who reflects on her career and turbulent personal life. She talks about her first husband Tommy Lee, whom she married following a whirlwind four-day courtship, and discusses the nature of her recent relationship with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. She also opens up about her role as an animal rights activist, including persuading Vladimir Putin to ban the import of seal products into Russia.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Classic Mary Berry. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Triathlon. **2.45** Cycling. **4.30** Final Score. **5.10** A Question of Sport. (R) **5.40** Celebrity Mastermind. (R)
6.10 BBC News.
6.20 Regional Programme.
6.25 Pointless Celebrities. Colin Jackson, Roger Black, Rowetta, Tony Mortimer, Anna Ryder Richardson, Kirsten O'Brien and Chesney Hawkes compete in a 1990s-themed edition of the general knowledge quiz.
7.15 All Together Now. Rob Beckett hosts the Grand Final of the crowd-pleasing talent show, as the 10 finalists return to battle it out for the right to claim the £50,000 prize, and the title of champion. Each competitor performs a single song, hoping to get as many of the 100-strong panel of judges to join in. Then, the three highest-scoring singers take part in a make-or-break sing-off, performing a brand new song in one last attempt to impress the judges. Last in the series.
8.20 Casualty. Dylan faces a personal and professional dilemma when two members of his AA group arrive in the ED, and Ethan becomes convinced that Bea is the author of the Rage in Resus blog.
9.10 Troy: Fall of a City. The Greeks' grip on the city of Troy tightens, forcing Hector and Paris to embark on a risky mission to enlist the aid of a nearby ally. With only each other for support, the brothers' ordeal tests and strengthens their bond, but when a familiar face tells Hector the disturbing truth about Paris, the pair's newfound kinship is placed in jeopardy once more. Meanwhile, back in Troy, Helen finally begins to win over Andromache and the people of the city with her generosity, but she remains unaware that Menelaus and Agamemnon have devised an audacious plan to steal her back.
10.10 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.
10.30 Match of the Day.
11.55 Film: My Brother the Devil. (2012) Drama, starring James Floyd and Fady Elsayed.
1.40 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.45** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 Nature's Weirdest Events. (R) **6.25** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. (R) **6.55** The Pets Factor. **7.15** The Dengineers. **7.45** Absolute Genius: Monster Builds. **8.15** Beyond Bionic. **8.45** Robot Wars. (R) **9.45** Live Athletics. The World Indoor Championships. Gabby Logan presents coverage of the opening session on the third day of the competition, which takes place at Arena Birmingham. The opening round of heats in the men's 60m and 1500m are due to take place, along with the finals of the women's triple jump and men's shot put. With analysis from Michael Johnson, Denise Lewis, Paula Radcliffe and Colin Jackson, and commentary by Steve Cram, Andrew Cotter and Steve Backley. **1.30** Escape to the Continent. (R) **2.30** Me and My Dog: The Ultimate Contest. (R) **3.30** Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby. (R) **4.30** Hugh's Wild West. **5.30** Live Athletics. The World Indoor Championships. Gabby Logan presents coverage of the evening session on the third day of the competition, which takes place at Arena Birmingham. The schedule includes the finals of the men's 60m, 400m and 800m, as well as the women's 400m and 1500m finals. With analysis from Michael Johnson, Denise Lewis, Paula Radcliffe and Colin Jackson, and commentary by Steve Cram, Andrew Cotter and Steve Backley.
9.30 Film: A Little Chaos. (2014) Premiere. A female landscape designer is 17th-century France challenges boundaries of class and gender when she is chosen by King Louis XIV to create a new garden for the palace of Versailles. She becomes romantically involved with a fellow designer, whose creative philosophy is the opposite of hers. Period drama, starring Kate Winslet, Matthias Schoenaerts, Stanley Tucci and Alan Rickman, who also directed.
11.20 Film: The Help. (2011) An aspiring journalist returns to her Mississippi home in the 1960s and begins documenting the lives of black servants working for wealthy white families. Her project brings the community's household staff together, but creates controversy among their employers. Drama based on Kathryn Stockett's novel, starring Emma Stone, Viola Davis, Bryce Dallas Howard and an Oscar-winning Octavia Spencer.
1.40 Civilisations. (R) **2.40** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Bagel and Becky Show. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.25** Dancing on Ice. (R) **1.25** ITV News; Weather. **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Doncaster. Coverage of today's race meetings at Doncaster, Newbury and Kelso. **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R)
6.00 ITV News; Weather.
6.20 Regional Programme; Weather.
6.30 New You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring a vlogger who squirts perfume in her eyes and a runaway car that wrecks a campsite.
7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. The Geordie duo celebrate the 100th edition of their award-winning programme, and put their OBEs to good use as they join a secret service agency staffed by individuals with honours as their latest mystery spoof sketch gets under way. Oscar-winning actor Cuba Gooding Jr is this week's guest announcer, and Michael Ball and Alfie Boe help out with the End of the Show Show. Plus, Stephen Mulhern gives members of the public in Warrington the chance to win a cash prize in this week's In for a Penny, and Scarlett Moffatt has another huge surprise in store for an unsuspecting family.
8.30 The Voice UK. The singers who made it through the audition stages face another round of head-to-head performances, as the second night of the Battles phase arrives.
9.50 Piers Morgan's Life Stories. The host interviews former Baywatch star Pamela Anderson, who reflects on her career.
10.45 ITV News; Weather.
11.05 Film: The Fast and the Furious. (2001) Thriller, starring Vin Diesel and Paul Walker.
1.05 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.45** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **7.10** The King of Queens. (R) **7.35** The King of Queens. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.30** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.35** A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun. (R) **4.35** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R) **5.35** The Supervet. (R)
6.30 Channel 4 News.
7.00 Penelope Keith's Coastal Villages. The actress discovers the idyllic coastal villages of East Anglia. She travels by train to the Edwardian holiday resort of Weybourne, and goes dredging at Cley next the Sea. She also hears a scandalous take in Stiffkey, and heads to Thorpeness, Suffolk, to visit a village inspired by the tale of Peter Pan. Plus, she takes in the ancient settlement of Dunwich, and ends her journey at Walberswick. Previously seen on More4.
8.00 Britain at Low Tide. Tori Herridge explores more tales of Britain's rich maritime history, this time visiting the banks of the Clyde. In Glasgow, she finds evidence of a busy Iron Age waterway and an enormous wall built to channel the water, illustrating the complex relationship between the city and the river it was built upon. She also discovers an oddly shaped vessel in a boat graveyard that would have been instrumental in constructing the wall.
9.00 Film: 10 Cloverfield Lane. (2016) Premiere. A woman survives a car crash, and wakes up to find herself in an underground bunker, belonging to a survivalist who claims that a devastating attack has left the outside world uninhabitable. As his behaviour becomes increasingly stranger, she begins to fear she is being tricked and resolves to discover the truth for herself. Thriller, starring Mary Elizabeth Winstead.
11.00 Film: Predator. (1987) Sci-fi thriller, with Arnold Schwarzenegger.
1.00 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **1.50** The Last Leg. (R) **2.45** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.55** The Question Jury. (R) **5.50** Superfoods: The Real Story. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.10** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.40** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud. **11.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.10** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.10** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **3.10** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **4.05** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **5.00** Rich House, Poor House. (R)
6.00 The Secret Life of Kittens. Part one of two. Documentary following kittens from birth to 12 months old, revealing how the sights, smells and sounds they experience and the friends they make during this period create†indelible impressions and shape their unique personalities. †Cameras capture all the formative moments, including their first exploration of their home environment, their curtain-climbing acrobatics, and the first time they venture out to meet the neighbourhood cats. (R)
7.00 Cruising with Jane McDonald. The singer heads to Alaska, America's largest state and home to some of the most breathtaking scenery on the planet. She takes a helicopter trip up to an ice field for a dog-sledding adventure, and later witnesses the majesty of the Margery glacier, a 21-mile stretch of ice in the Glacier Bay National Park. On board Holland America's ship Nieuw Amsterdam, Jane goes backstage to meet the cast of the nightly musicals, has a cooking lesson from the executive chef and reveals how to make the most of a lazy day in port. Last in the series. (R)
8.00 The Queen Mary: Cruising with the Royals. Part two of two. Rob Bell examines RMS Queen Mary, the most famous ocean liner ever built and the first merchant naval ship ever to have been launched by a reigning sovereign. (R)
8.55 5 News Weekend.
9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Wolverhampton Wanderers v Reading and Aston Villa v Queens Park Rangers.
10.00 Live Championship Boxing. Josh Taylor v Humberto Soto.
11.30 Football on 5: Goal Rush.
12.00 SuperCasino. **3.10** Cowboy Builders. (R) **4.45** House Doctor. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 The Dark: Nature's Nighttime World **8.00** Masters of the Pacific Coast: The Tribes of the American Northwest **9.00** Modus **10.30** Promises & Lies: The Story of UB40 **11.30** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.40** The Shires: New Country **1.40** Masters of the Pacific Coast: The Tribes of the American Northwest **2.40** Promises & Lies: The Story of UB40 **3.40** Close
ITV2
11.35 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **1.15 Film:** Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **2.25** FYI Daily **2.30 Film:** Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **3.00 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang (2010) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang (2010) **5.15 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **6.15** FYI Daily **6.20 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **7.00 Film:** Uncle Buck (1989) **8.05** FYI Daily **8.10 Film:** Uncle Buck (1989) **9.00 Film:** White House Down (2013) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05 Film:** White House Down (2013) **11.35** Family Guy **12.35** American Dad! **1.30** Ibiza Weekender **2.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.55** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen
ITV3
1.20 Agatha Christie's Marple **3.25 Film:** Columbo: Double Shock (1973) **5.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** The Good Karma Hospital **1.55** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
12.00 Storage Wars **12.30** Live Darts: UK Open. Coverage of the second day at the Butlins Minehead Resort. **5.00** Football's Greatest: Eusebio **5.05** Pawn Stars **7.00** Live Darts: UK Open. Further coverage of the second day at the Butlins Minehead Resort. **11.05 Film:** Reservoir Dogs (1992) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10 Film:** Reservoir Dogs (1992) **1.10** Minder **2.10** Tommy Cooper **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
11.20 Film: Stuart Little (1999) **1.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00 Film:** Men in Black 3 (2012) **9.00 Film:** Identity Thief (2013) **11.15** Gogglebox **12.20** Celebs Go Dating **2.35** Celebs Go Dating: The Finale **3.25** Timeless **4.10** Don't Tell the Bride Ireland **5.05** How I Met Your Mother
Film4
1.00 Field of Dreams (1989) **3.05** Carry On Teacher (1959) **4.50** Morning Glory (2010) **7.00** Tomorrow, When the War Began (2010) **9.00** A Good Day to Die Hard (2013) **10.50** Double Jeopardy (1999) **12.55** The Craft (1996) **3.00** Close

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SUNDAY'S TV MARCH 4

CHOICE

Tom Burke

Strike – Career of Evil (BBC1, 9pm)

Part two of two. Strike goes in search of a murder suspect in several London's strip clubs, but a furious Wardle warns him not to interfere in police business. Robin's relationship hits an all-time low as she considers whether she wants to go through with getting married, while her mother urges her to consider her priorities. She comes to Matthew's aid when the killer sends him a severed thumb, but recklessly turns to Shanker for help behind Strike's back, urging him to take her to a suspect's home.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Murder, Mystery and My Family. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** MasterChef. (R) **2.15** MasterChef. (R) **3.15** MasterChef. (R) **3.45** Money for Nothing. (R) **4.15** Songs of Praise. **4.50 Film:** Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa. (2008) Animated comedy sequel.

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. Helen Skelton presents a compilation of items from previous episodes on the theme of water from Kielder Water in Northumberland, and also takes a look at how everyday life is shaped by it.

7.30 Hold the Sunset. Mrs Gale gives herself the task of being an unofficial marriage guidance counsellor to Roger and Wendy, while Edith and Phil seize the chance to get away for the weekend.

8.00 Call the Midwife. Barbara's condition is not improving and she is kept in isolation at the hospital, leaving her friends able to do nothing but wait for more news. Dr Turner and Shelagh assist a man being held in a remand home whose wife is pregnant, while Lucille makes some new friends.

9.00 Strike – Career of Evil. Part two of two. Strike goes in search of a murder suspect in London's strip clubs, and Robin's relationship hits an all-time low, especially when the killer sends Matthew a thumb.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's two Premier League fixtures - Manchester City v Chelsea at the Etihad Stadium and Brighton & Hove Albion v Arsenal at the Amex Stadium. Pep Guardiola's side were looking to extend their lead at the top of the table, and move one step closer to what is looking like a certain title. The Seagulls were hoping to cause an upset against the Gunners, and move away from the relegation places.

11.30 Film: Reign of Fire. (2002) Fantasy adventure, starring Christian Bale.

1.05 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.10** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 Coast. (R) **6.50** A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.15** The Instant Gardener. (R) **8.00** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.30** Countryfile. (R) **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge. (R) **11.45** Lorraine Pascale: How to Be a Better Cook. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Live Cycling. Coverage of day five of the Track World Championships in the Netherlands. **2.45** Live Athletics. The World Indoor Championships.

6.00 Back in Time for Tea. A family embarks on a time-travelling adventure to discover how a post-war revolution in food transformed the British way of life, sampling meals from 1918 to the present day. (R)

7.00 The World's Most Extraordinary Homes. Award-winning architect Piers Taylor and actress and property enthusiast Caroline Quentin explore extraordinary homes built in mountain, forest, coastal and underground locations around the world, meeting the owners and architects brave enough to take the challenges on. (R)

8.00 Top Gear. The motoring show goes Stateside with a trip to California, where Matt LeBlanc and Chris Harris venture into some of the densest forests in the state to put some off-road vehicles through their paces – and maybe see if there is any truth to the local legends of Bigfoot while they are at it. Returning to the studio, the guys are joined by this week's guest comedian Lee Mack, while Chris takes the McLaren 720S for a spin on the test track and Rory Reid invents the new sport of reverse camera racing.

9.00 Life and Death Row: The Mass Execution. A look at capital punishment through the eyes of young people whose lives have been shaped by it, including interviews from those on death row and their families.

10.20 The Mash Report. Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present the satirical and surreal take on the week's news. (R)

10.50 Top Gear: Extra Gear.

11.15 Cleverman.

12.10 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **1.10** Holby City. (R) **2.10** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Love Your Garden. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Voice UK. (R) **12.20** ITV News; Weather. **12.30** Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. (R) **2.00** What Would Your Kid Do? (R) **3.00** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **3.30** Tipping Point. (R) **4.30** ITV News; Weather. **4.45** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.00 Dancing on Ice. Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby present the semi-final of the skating contest. Only four celebrities remain in the running – and only three of them will be going through to next week's grand finale. They must put on a spectacular show to impress judges Christopher Dean, Jayne Torvill, Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo, before a final skate-off decides who will be leaving the show.

8.00 Endeavour. Morse investigates an assassination attempt at an international sporting event, but the case is very quickly closed. While Thursday is determined to walk away, Morse delves deeper, getting drawn into a web of intrigue involving espionage, big business and a dark secret in the heart of the Oxford community. Meanwhile, Thursday faces a moral dilemma as he tries to protect a woman from her violent husband.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.15 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.15 The Martin Lewis Money Show. The financial journalist presents money-saving tips to help consumers cope with the current economic climate. (R)

11.40 100 Year Old Driving School. Cameras follow some of Britain's oldest drivers as they put themselves through the paces of a mature driving assessment. (R)

12.05 Marcella. (R) **1.00** Jackpot247. **3.00** Take on the Twisters. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.55** The Simpsons. (R) **2.25** The Simpsons. (R) **2.55 Film:** Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters. (2013) Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Logan Lerman. **4.55 Film:** Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb. (2014) Fantasy comedy sequel, starring Ben Stiller.

6.40 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Posh Pawn. High-end pawnbroker James heads to Marbella to appraise a 75ft yacht worth £250,000. However, he finds the vessel rather tricky to locate. Plus, an aspiring restaurateur seeks to raise £80,000 by selling his Ferrari Spyder, and a large diamond ring that was handed down through the generations gets James hot under the collar. (R)

8.00 Churchill's Secret Affair. Documentary exploring the secret relationship between the prime minister and a woman he met in the South of France during the 1930s. During an important visit to President Roosevelt at the height of the war, he was reunited with his former lover, now stranded in the US and in possession of a portrait that could have a devastating impact during a dangerous period for the nation.

9.00 Homeland. A revelation leads to distress for Carrie, while Saul negotiates. Keane and Wellington do not see eye to eye over an important matter. Espionage drama, starring Claire Danes, Mandy Patinkin, Linus Roache and Elizabeth Marvel.

10.05 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Jimmy Carr hosts the comedy panel show's version of the words-and-numbers quiz, as Jon Richardson and Jayde Adams take on Sean Lock and Joe Wilkinson. (R)

11.05 Lee Mack: Hit the Road Mack. The comedian performs at London's Hammersmith Apollo in a show from his 2014 tour. (R)

12.05 Film: The Haunting. (1999) **2.00** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **2.30** The Supervet. (R) **3.25** Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners. (R) **4.20** Coast vs Country. (R) **5.10** Superfoods: The Real Story. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.15** Mofy. (R) **6.20** Simon. (R) **6.25** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.30** Paw Patrol. (R) **6.45** Thomas & Friends. (R) **6.55** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.05** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.15** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **7.40** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.00** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.15** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.35** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.50** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.00** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.15** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.25** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **10.15** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **10.45** FIA Formula E: Highlights. **11.50** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.50 Film:** Wyatt Earp. (1994) Western, starring Kevin Costner. **4.25 Film:** The Dirty Dozen. (1967) Second World War action adventure, with Lee Marvin. **5.25** 5 News Update. **5.30 Film:** The Dirty Dozen. (1967) Concluded.

7.20 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Agents try to recover almost £2,000 owed by the owner of a bridal shop in London, while officers in Kent chase over £4,000 of vet fees after two neighbouring dogs got into a fight. (R)

8.00 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Agents in central London try to recover almost £1,900 owed in parking fines, while officers Stewart and Vic chase over £2,200 owed by a scrap yard owner to a shipping company. Finally, Stewart and Vic head to Merseyside to recover over £3,500 owed by a publishing company to an unhappy ex-employee. (R)

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 When Award Shows Go Horribly Wrong. Julian Clary narrates a compilation of disastrous moments at awards show, including autocue failures (as well as one act of sabotage courtesy of Michael Barrymore) and wardrobe malfunctions including Madonna's infamous cape disaster. Featuring contributions from the stars who were present, including Samantha Fox's first-hand account of hosting the infamously shambolic 1989 Brit awards.

11.55 Jo Brand: Secrets of Her Success. Friends including Ross Noble, Alan Davies, Meera Syal, Morwenna Banks, Jimmy Mulville and Ricky Grover celebrate the former nurse's 30-year career in comedy. (R)

12.55 Cruising with Jane McDonald. (R) **1.05** SuperCasino. **3.10** Cowboy Builders. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Killer Whales: Beneath the Surface – Natural World **9.00** Timeshift: Full Throttle – The Glory Days of British Motorbikes **10.00** From Ice to Fire: The Incredible Science of Temperature **11.00** Conversations – Shirley Williams **12.00** Killer Whales: Beneath the Surface – Natural World **1.00** The Mountain That Had to Be Painted **2.00** The Art of France **3.00** From Ice to Fire: The Incredible Science of Temperature **4.00** Close

ITV2

3.05 Film: The Flintstones (1994) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** The Flintstones (1994) **4.50 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **5.55** FYI Daily **6.00 Film:** Legally Blonde (2001) **6.45 Film:** Jack the Giant Slayer (2013) **7.50** FYI Daily **7.55 Film:** Jack the Giant Slayer (2013) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy **11.25** American Dad! **12.25** The Cleveland Show **12.50 Film:** Bachelorette (2012) **1.50** FYI Daily **1.55 Film:** Bachelorette (2012) **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV3

11.35 A Touch of Frost **1.50** Agatha Christie's Marple **4.00** Lewis **6.00** The Durrells **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00 Film:** Chocolat (2000) **12.25** Life of Crime **1.25** Blue Murder **2.40** George and Mildred **3.05** Rising Damp **3.55** Road to Avonlea

ITV4

12.45 Live Darts: UK Open. **5.00** Football's Greatest: Thierry Henry **5.05** Pawn Stars **7.00** Live Darts: UK Open. **11.00 Film:** The Keeper (2009) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10 Film:** The Keeper (2009) **12.55** River Monsters **2.00** Tommy Cooper **2.30** ITV4 Nightscreen

E4

11.05 Film: Stuart Little 2 (2002) **12.35** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **1.00** The Goldbergs **1.30** The Big Bang Theory: Superheroes **5.30** Young Sheldon **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **6.30 Film:** Captain America: The First Avenger (2011) **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.50** The Big Bang Theory **11.50** Gogglebox **12.55** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **2.40** Timeless **3.25** Rude Tube **3.50** Hollyoaks

Film4

11.00 Dancing at Lughnasa (1998) **1.00** The Jane Austen Book Club (2007) **3.05** Fast Girls (2012) **4.50** Crocodile Dundee (1986) **6.45** The Other Boleyn Girl (2008) **9.00** Fast & Furious 6 (2013) **11.35** The Purge (2013) **1.15** The Principles of Lust (2003) **3.30** Close

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Jacky Standish

ATTRACTIVE, confident and with a contagious laugh – that's professional chef, Jacky Standish.

Looking younger than her 57 years, Jacky has recently drawn up an unusual "bucket list", though she's quick to point out: "I'm not dying."

For Jacky, who was so ashamed of her teeth she walked her dog at 5am to avoid meeting people, clever dentistry at North Street has marked a new life chapter, punctuated with a list of the all places she's only dreamed of dining.

The former chef and house manager at Hagley Hall has undergone a major transformation after gum disease ruined her smile, confidence and her ability to chew properly.

Now, with four implants retaining an upper over-denture and a partial lower traditional prosthetic, she's thrilled with her new look. "My jaw is sore from smiling so much. No-one would ever know they are not my natural teeth," she says.

Theresa Reardon

WHEN Theresa Reardon from London set out to fix a longstanding dental problem she never imagined it would take a lifetime's search before finding the answer in Dudley.

Even a trip as a dental tourist to Budapest failed to help the 82-year-old.

After a lifetime of denture troubles, it was during a visit to a friend at Wolverhampton she found fresh hope in a newspaper article. For eight years the former Queen's Household domestic kept the cutting about the work of Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS Eng GDC108353.

"I read it over and over again, then one day booked an appointment," she recalls.

"I could never bite an apple – the bottom denture was all over the place – but the day I had my new dentures I went out and had a steak. Steven has done for me what no other dentist has. It's been a long time coming, I'm so grateful that I don't have to put my hand over my mouth any more."

Vicki Ball

MEETING Vicki Ball is all about the smiles – lots of them and she's gushing with the praise about her new smile.

A retired community midwife, who was based in Wordsley, the bubbly 60-something-year-old is quick to affirm: "I love my new teeth."

Adding, "you can't tell they're not my own," Vicki admits her smile has not always been her favourite attribute.

"I'd grown tired of living my life around my uncomfortable dentures.

I never really stopped going out, but when I did, I was always thinking ahead where I could go to take my teeth out." Vicki's treatment included two implants to stabilise a lower prosthetic and the prescribing of high quality, traditional upper dentures to help support facial features.

"My husband, Terry, couldn't believe they were so good. Not to have to keep thinking about my teeth when I'm out is such a relief," she says.

John Clews

JOHN Clews is sharply focussed on why he's agreed to do this interview: "I want to give people like me hope," he declares.

The skilled die-sinker knows a thing or two about clever engineering – and with multiple failing teeth, instinctively realised that he too required the kind of skill that sets him apart as an experienced factory problem-solver.

For years he endured daily toothache, but crippled by fear of the dentist, avoided treatment until he could no longer tolerate the problems.

"I came here [North Street] and they promised to restore my smile, but they gave me back my life," he adds.

After having six implants in his upper jaw to support a complete arch of teeth and other remedial work,

John is now able to live his life without having to worry about his teeth.

And the dental phobia? "All staff were fantastic, I felt so much at ease."

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Forbidden Secrets, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A recently divorced woman returns to her family home to begin rebuilding her life, but her stay turns into a nightmare when she has frightening visions of her troubled childhood, during which her mother tried to drown her. Determined to face her fears, she visits the institution where her parent resides, and inadvertently triggers a series of terrifying events. Thriller, starring Kristy Swanson and David Keeley. (2005)

TUESDAY
Bond of Silence, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman searches for answers after her husband is mysteriously murdered while trying to subdue a wild teenage house party on New Year's Eve. However, as she tries to find out the truth, she faces secrecy at every turn from the party-goers and their parents. Drama, starring Kim Raver, Greg Grunberg and Charlie McDermott. (2010)

Captain America: The Winter Soldier, Friday, BBC1, 11.05pm

WEDNESDAY
Memento, BBC1, 11.45pm
An insurance investigator suffers from short-term memory loss after an attack in which his wife was also raped and murdered. Unable to remember events for more than a few minutes, he is determined to track down the killer and relies on copious note-taking and reminders tattooed on his body to aid his mission. Christopher Nolan's thriller, starring Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss and Mark Boone Jr. (2000)

THURSDAY
A Bone to Pick: An Aurora Teagarden Mystery:, Channel 5, 3.20pm
When an amateur sleuth finds a skull hidden in her new home she sets out to discover who the victim was. Whodunit, with Candace Cameron Bure. (2015)

FRIDAY
Captain America: The Winter Soldier, BBC1, 11.05pm
The superhuman soldier battles a mysterious cyborg assassin as he uncovers a sinister conspiracy. Comic-book thriller sequel, starring Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Samuel L Jackson, Anthony Mackie and Robert Redford. (2014)

PICK OF THE WEEK

Lee goes from one disaster to the next in returning sitcom

It has survived some significant personnel changes and no end of critical disdain over the years to become the longest running sitcom currently on British television.

The opening episode of Not Going Out's previous series (its eighth) attracted a whopping 5.52 million viewers, a record for the show.

And no TV boss in their right mind would dare to utter the words "this is not going out" with those types of viewing figures.

The sitcom was originally inspired by a sketch in Lee Mack's Bits at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and it was the first British comedy to be filmed in front of a live studio audience that was subsequently broadcast in HD.

The original ideas for the title of the show were Three's a Crowd, Three, and the number of the apartment.

In the pilot, Kate was played by Catherine Tate (Megan Dodds eventually took over), and she had an ex-boyfriend called Colin, who was a city boy, with stubble and a leather jacket.

Then, at the end of season one, Tim Vine's real-life sister Sonya was considered for the role of Lucy, before it eventually went to Sally Bretton.

Meanwhile, Katy Wix, who played the dizzy Daisy from series three, was actually never meant to be a regular.

But despite all these changes (you may also recall Miranda Hart starring too for a couple of series), Mack and Bretton, along with a solid ensemble cast including Bobby Ball, Hugh Dennis, Abigail Cruttenden, Geoffrey Whitehead and Deborah Grant, have continued to make Not Going Out's loyal fans tune in and laugh.

Many critics claimed the show was tired and predictable, but it returned in January 2017 with a different setting, and a new lease of comedy life.

The timeline had jumped ahead seven years and the will-they-won't-they flat-based comedy had morphed into a family sitcom.

King of the one-liner Lee is now married to Lucy and the show follows the mismatched couple as they navigate the challenges of being parents to three young children.

The title works now more than ever, you could say.

Tonight, Not Going Out returns with it's ninth run, and we rejoin Lee and Lucy in the anarchic, packed family house with kids Charlie and twin siblings, Benji and Molly.

As if children weren't enough to keep the couple crashing from one near-disaster to the next, factor in Lee's lovably feckless father, Frank, and close friends in the form of the world-weary, or more specifically wife-weary, Toby, and his other half, uptight ice-queen Anna.

At least Lucy's more dependable parents are on hand to offer guidance, but we all know what Geoffrey and Wendy make of their daughter's life choices, and more specifically, her wisecracking husband.

Not Going Out, Thursday, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Collateral
BBC2, 9pm
The police use the video footage Fatima provided to arrest Mehmet and Bhuran, while Nathan tips off Sam Spence about the arrests. In Westminster, Mars finally faces party leader Deborah Clifford and is given a final chance to toe the line, but his main focus is on his private life. Back at the station, Jack Haley harangues Kip for offering Fatima residency, something she is unable to guarantee. Conclusion of David Hare's crime thriller, starring Carey Mulligan and John Simm. Last in the series.

TUESDAY
The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer
Channel 4, 8pm
If you needed any further proof that The Great British Bake Off is still in rude health following its move to Channel 4, then just look at the stars who have signed up for this five-part run of celebrity specials. Future episodes will see the likes of Alan Carr, Lee Mack and former Desperate Housewife Teri Hatcher attempting to bake up a storm in the name of Stand Up to Cancer. However, the first batch of famous faces to grab their mixing bowls are Spandau Ballet's Martin Kemp, actor and writer Roisin Conaty, veteran broadcaster Bill Turnbull and comedian Harry Hill. Their first challenge is a bake sale classic - cupcakes. But then the competition intensifies with a fiery technical, followed by a demanding showstopper that involves recreating the best day of their lives as a three-dimensional biscuit scene.

WEDNESDAY
One Born Every Minute
Channel 4, 9pm
New series. The award-winning documentary series moves to Birmingham Women's Hospital, following the highs and lows of a new group of soon-to-be parents in the maternity ward. In the first episode, 25-year-old Samantha and her partner Tony, who struggled for years to conceive, return to the ward after losing their first child at 25 weeks. However, Samantha's medical history means the birth is not without challenges. Meanwhile, 33-year-old Sharon and 44-year-old Rav come to the hospital expecting their second child together, and Rhiana and her partner Lee hope for another textbook water birth for the arrival of their second son.

The Gadget Show, Friday, Channel 5, 7pm

THURSDAY
Crufts 2018
Channel 4, 8pm
The world's biggest canine competition got under way today – Clare Balding and Alan Carr kicked off the Channel 4 coverage earlier this afternoon on Crufts Extra. Now Clare, who must surely be one of the hardest-working presenters on TV, is back with continued live coverage of the event, where judging includes the Working and Pastoral groups, and there are highlights of the Flyball and Agility competitions, with the latter celebrating its 40th year at the contest. Plus, there will also be dog stories (not necessarily of the shaggy variety) and chats with the guests.

FRIDAY
The Gadget Show
Channel 5, 7pm
New series. Ortis Deley and Georgie Barrat travel to Nevada to visit the world's biggest consumer electronics show in Las Vegas. The events boasts upgraded drones, upgraded VR headsets, upgraded televisions and a stream of new robots to help around the house. Meanwhile, Jon Bentley joins Craig Charles in a 'versus' challenge to see if cutting-edge tech can put them on a par with professional decorators. Jon and Craig have access to the finest aids that tech has to offer, while the professionals have to rely on experience, skill and traditional tools.

Gardeners' World
BBC2, 8.30pm
New series. The imminent arrival of spring heralds a new gardening year at Longmeadow, as Monty Don reveals his new plans for the year and takes stock of any winter damage. As well as offering seasonal hints and tips, the presenter embarks on a mission to reduce the use of plastic in his garden, starting by exploring alternative containers to use for seed sowing. Adam Frost brings his design expertise to a tiny back yard to demonstrate that, with a bit of ingenuity, every inch of space can count. A Wolverhampton couple show off their inspirational garden, packed to bursting with surprises. Includes a weather forecast for gardeners.

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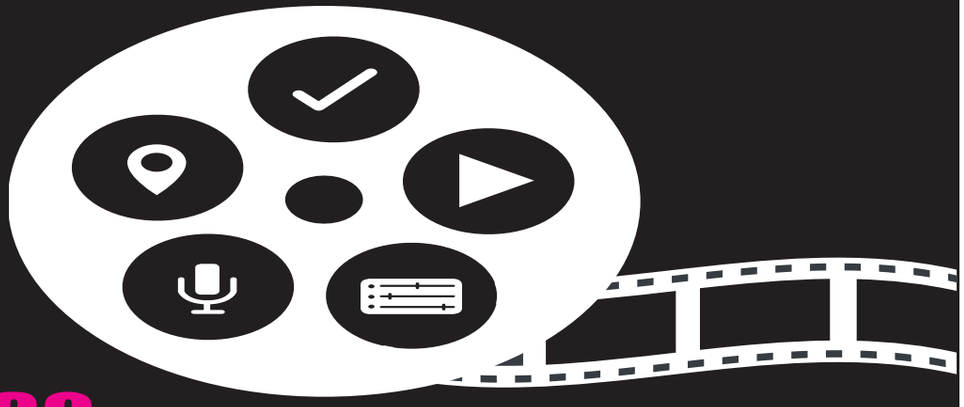
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No.469

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

	19		18		21	23	8	8	16	2	19	21
8	26	17	17			25		6		16		6
	10		6	5	18	26	17	9		17	6	23
12	24	4	6					23		12		9
			3		6	22	6	3	12	14	5	25
13	26	7	6	17		16		12		19		6
14		14			14	2	19			17		23
20		15		20		1		9	8	24	6	8
3	21	23	19	6	8	26	5		21			
6		8		11					24	26	17	4
8	26	9		16	5	1	26	17	12		23	
23		8		6		16			21	23	15	24
17	26	24	23	17	14 I	20 S	12		2		24	

1	14 I
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20 S
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 T	2 U	3 A	4 J	5 Y	6 L	7 G	8 B	9 V	10 P	11 N	12 X	13 C
14 H	15 Q	16 O	17 R	18 M	19 E	20 F	21 D	22 I	23 K	24 S	25 W	26 Z

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. They should show some interest at the way clerics are dressed (11)
9. What the gravestone reveals will produce a tear (3)
10. Cutting an earth defence needs an industrious worker (9)
11. He's one of a panel in any case (5)
13. He's unlikely to be in a class of his own (7)
14. One going in the vessel for a trip (6)
16. Sheep doctor going round old Ireland (6)
18. Asian country surrounding an American state (7)
19. Part of the reason I contrive a kind of boom (5)
20. Fractionally, it's on top (9)
21. The water regulator needs a light touch (3)
22. White cat is only an ounce! (4,7)

Down

2. A rest in the afternoon, apparently (3)
3. One who finds things of consuming interest (5)
4. You'll find me involved with this as a doctrine (6)
5. Omit what was once indicated in a crossword, one hears! (7)
6. Somehow get in RADA as a serious actor (9)
7. Outstanding pieces for cinemagoers (11)
8. This may well detect a change of heart (11)
12. Golf er who makes regular deliveries! (9)
15. Bird pole with line underneath (7)
17. Action that changes the tablet (6)
19. Remove the covering from a lath (5)
21. Sailor found lying on the road (3)

	1	2		3		4		5		6		
7												8
9				10								
11		12				13						
14				15			16					
						17						
18								19				
20										21		
	22											

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Concealment (11)
9. Sheep (3)
10. Warranty (9)
11. Foe (5)
13. Cost (7)
14. Accompany (6)
16. Bury (6)
18. Momentum (7)
19. Teacher (5)
20. Worldwide (9)
21. Choose (3)
22. Unceasingly (11)

Down

2. Employ (3)
3. Dwarf (5)
4. Effaced (6)
5. Whet (7)
6. Thorough (3-3-3)
7. Harmful (11)
8. Resound (11)
12. Exclusion (9)
15. Alleviate (7)
17. Against (6)
19. Claw (5)
21. Lubricate (3)

Sudoku

	2		3			7		
				2	5			9
1		8	9	6				3
	8					3	7	
	7	2		8		9	5	
		5	7				6	
	9			7	3			4
8			6	1				
		1				6	3	

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

1	4	5	8	6	3	7	9	2
9	7	3	1	5	2	8	4	6
6	2	8	4	7	9	1	5	3
3	5	2	6	9	7	4	1	8
7	9	1	3	8	4	6	2	5
8	6	4	2	1	5	9	3	7
2	1	6	9	3	8	5	7	4
5	3	9	7	4	6	2	8	1
4	8	7	5	2	1	3	6	9

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Miss; 3 Handicap; 9 Relates; 10 Amber; 11 Green fingers; 13 Labial; 15 Statue; 17 Maiden voyage; 20 Limbo; 21 Restive; 22 Tendered; 23 Left.
Down: 1 Marigold; 2 Solve; 4 Assail; 5 Draught horse; 6 Cabaret; 7 Port; 8 Standard rose; 12 Reverent; 14 Boatman; 16 Entree; 18 Aside; 19 Flat.
QUICK - Across: 1 Envy; 3 Friction; 9 Fungoid; 10 Upset; 11 Complication; 13 Climbs; 15 Writhe; 17 Appreciation; 20 About; 21 Untwine; 22 Steadily; 23 Dyes. Down: 1 Efficacy; 2 Venom; 4 Reduce; 5 Counterparts; 6 In short; 7 Note; 8 Collaborated; 12 Keenness; 14 Improve; 16 Actual; 18 Icily; 19 Pass.

Quiz

1. Which London boxer died after a title fight in 1994?
2. Which coin was first minted in Florence in 1252?
3. What is the official residence of the presidents of France?
4. Of what is copra the dried kernel?
5. Who, as minister of health, inaugurated the NHS?
6. At which racetrack were Ayrton Senna and Roland Ratzenberger killed?
7. Which club overthrew the Girondists in the French Revolution?
8. What do we call the large wild cat Acinonyx jubatus?
9. How is Jerusalem's Western Wall also known?
10. Which order of knighthood's motto is Honi soit qui mal y pense?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Evita Peron; 2 Thrush; 3 The Rockies and the Appalachians; 4 78; 5 Oklahoma; 6 Kew Gardens; 7 Babylonian; 8 Gannet; 9 Agronomy; 10 USA.

Niner: NIGHTMARE

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

465378 gives a Russian leader,
12678 gives a second Russian leader,
3295 gives a Russian river.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Oh Chiang Mai! It's hot in the city

Golden temples, bathtime with elephants, knocking up Tom Yum soup or wandering through a bustling night-time market, it's all part of a holiday in Thailand's second biggest city.

For those more used to Bangkok, Chiang Mai is a refreshing change. More relaxed, the emphasis on culture and exploration rather than the nightlife. The place just feels friendlier and more laid back. A lot of that is down to the almost legendary politeness of Thai people. The wai, the greeting with the slight bow and the hands pressed together, becomes infectious. Chaing Mai is in the north of Thailand, surrounded by mountain greenery. And, thanks to Qatar Airways, getting there is simple these days.

COMFORT

The airline runs regular flights to Doha, the capital of Qatar – and from there it offers a direct service straight to Chaing Mai. It is still around 16 hours of flight time, but Qatar Airways prides itself on comfort and service which eases the stresses and strain of a long journey.

The Shangri-La in Chaing Mai is part of a chain of luxury five-star hotels, with big comfortable rooms well equipped with air-conditioning – a must when the average temperatures are around 30C or more and the humidity is high, particularly at night.

My tour group and I got to experience the humid Thai evening when we headed out to explore Chiang Mai's Sunday night street market. Around 10,000 people regularly pack into the streets of the historic city centre to visit the hundreds of stalls selling handicrafts, most made by the local hill people. And then there is the street food. Our guide, Ms Rattiya ('Call me Yaya') explained that most Thais eat out in the evening. As in many well-developed Asian economies, people work long hours and, rather than cook when they get home, it is easier to go out. As a result, restaurant and street food is both reasonably priced and very good.

The Wat Phra That Doi Suthep temple

One of the many stalls offering street food

An early start the next morning saw our minibus climbing the 2,500ft to reach the Wat Phra That Doi Suthep temple – almost.

The final 290 steps are up a Naga staircase, decorated with dragons to reach the temple itself and its huge Chedi, or golden spired pagoda, which contains partial relics of the Lord Buddha. It is a wonderful experience but visitors need to show some respect – Thais take their Buddhist faith seriously. Meanwhile our non-stop schedule took us across the city to the Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School, where Chef Pon introduced us to the mysteries of Thai cuisine.

He showed us what to do, and we then got on with it, eating each dish as we finished cooking it. Those self-made dishes did mean that it was a struggle to find space for more food at the traditional Kantoke dinner that evening.

While we sat on cushions on the floor to dine – easier for some than others – the main entertainment of formal dances showcased local culture.

And then for something completely different. The following day was a trip to the Thai Elephant Care Centre, at Mae Sa, near Mae Rim. Getting close to these magnificent animals was a lifetime experience.

It's been two decades since I was last in Thailand and I can't say I was impressed. Very touristy and a bit seedy.

Chiang Mai was a revelation. Relaxed but packed with things to see and do.

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Detached home on a corner plot has three bedrooms and a garage

SEDGLEY
£210,000 >>>

This charming modern three-bedroomed detached house for sale in Ley Rise, Northway, Sedgley, is for sale through Wakeman Estate Agents at £210,000 with no chain.

The property occupies a slightly elevated corner plot on the popular Northway estate with well-maintained and well-proportioned three-bedroom accommodation.

This briefly comprises an entrance hall, a kitchen, living room, three bedrooms, a bathroom, garage, a garden and parking.

It is conveniently situated for a wide range of amenities in Sedgley village, together with access to surrounding centres and yet is close to open greenbelt countryside.

In more detail the lounge has an Adam-style fireplace with a Vallor home flame gas fire and French doors leading to the garden with a store off.

Call 01384 459999.

Extended four-bed semi-detached in a popular location

WOLLASTON
£289,950

Situated at a popular address, this successfully extended and re-planned four-bedroomed semi-detached family home in Richmond Grove Wollaston, Stourbridge, is for sale through Taylors Estate Agents at £289,950.

Its accommodation briefly comprises a reception hall, a guests cloakroom/WC, a pleasant sitting room, a generous extended kitchen with a combined family room and dining area, four bedrooms (one with an en-suite) and a re-appointed house bathroom having a modern suite.

There is also a large block paved driveway, a garage and a long rear garden with an impressive deck.

In further detail the reception hall has oak-style laminate flooring and extends to over 13 feet with stairs leading off.

The guest cloakroom/WC is re-appointed.

The pleasant sitting room has a walk-in half bay

window to the front, a neutral décor, and a continuation of the oak-style laminate flooring.

The large well-fitted kitchen has French-style doors to the rear garden, being furnished with an excellent range of white cupboard fronted units, with base cupboards and drawers being surmounted by "real wood" butchers block-styled work surfaces.

To a central peninsular there is an inset stainless steel one and a half bowl sink and drainer having mixer tap, cupboards below and a full sized integrated dishwasher.

The selling agents are expecting the sale of this property to generate a lot of interest.

Contact Taylors on 01384 395555.

Two-bedroomed apartment is modern and for sale with no chain

DUDLEY
£114,950 <<<

This modern two-bedroomed purpose-built lower ground floor apartment in Lingwood Hall, 12 St James Road, Dudley, is for sale through Trinity Property at £114,950 with no chain.

The property's accommodation briefly comprises a modern fitted kitchen with a patio door to the communal gardens and patio area.

This leads to a large lounge, with doors to the internal hallway, further doors lead to two double bedrooms – with the master bedroom having an en-suite shower/WC off. There is also a house bathroom/WC and front and rear entrances to the apartment. Outside, this home has allocated parking and secure gated parking.

The selling agents are expecting a great deal of interest to be shown in the sale of this property.

Contact Trinity Property on 01384 213 395 or visit www.trinityproperty.net

The spacious SUV from MG

MG GS is now on Motability scheme

MG Motor UK's SUV, the MG GS, is now available through the Motability scheme. For an advanced payment of under £300, you can enjoy all the benefits the MG GS brings, including the 483 litres of boot space, more than enough for transporting everything you need for those special family getaways.

On offer for the advanced payment and 100% of the weekly allowance, the MG GS is available to people on the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance, the Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment or the Armed Forces Independence Payment schemes. In addition, the MG GS can be leased at a similarly competitive rate for people on the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement

Available on Motability at Excite and Exclusive specifications, the MG GS comes packed with crowd-pleasing looks and perfectly stands up to every aspect of your weekly routine. Whether it's a trip to the shops, the school run or a weekend at the beach, the versatile MG GS is up to the challenge. In addition, the MG GS comes with a 5-year/80,000 miles warranty as standard, giving peace of mind motoring. This complements the 5-year/60,000 miles warranty that comes with the MG3 and the class-leading 7-year/80,000 miles warranty that comes with the MG ZS, both as standard.

Daniel Gregorious, head of sales and marketing at MG Motor UK, said: "At MG, we have long been supporters of the excellent work done by the Motability scheme, and proud that our entire range is now available on the programme. More than two-thirds of the dealerships in the MG network have a Motability-trained specialist as part of their team, providing expert advice to customers. We are actively supporting other dealerships to install a trained member of staff."

For more information about the Motability Scheme, or to book a test drive, visit: www.mg.co.uk/motability/

Very Important Passenger in rear enjoys first class travel in Audi A8

By John Griffiths

Now for something a little different – a new car test conducted from the back seat.

Oh yes, I did drive the long wheelbase A8. But to fully appreciate this paragon of first class travel I really had to enter the 'lounge' area in the back and recruit a volunteer chauffeur to take the controls.

Big, comfortable armchairs, room to stretch out and full control over your environment and relax in tasteful, discreet luxury is what the A8 L is all about. If you're the sort of VIP or business mogul who likes to take personal control of things, it's pretty good to drive, too.

The test car was powered by the 'smallest' engine (a 3.0 litre V6) in a range which also includes a 4.2 litre turbodiesel, an eight cylinder, 5.5 litre petrol turbo and even the mighty, 6.3 litre W12 which it shares with the Bentley Bentayga.

Not that it's a major disadvantage, with a 0 to 62mph time of under six seconds the A80 L would see off many 'sporty' cars although that's not really the point.

Much more important in a car of this type is that the 286Ps of power 600Nm of torque means it will accelerate and cruise on motorways in near silence. I'd defy anyone to guess with any certainty it is a diesel.

It comes at a price, of course: £72,210 is the list price of the test model but as press demonstrator it was loaded with extras – £36,000 worth to be exact – to show what is available for the company executive or celebrity.

Most of these options were designed to pamper passengers, such as the twin TV screens, upgrade to a Bang & Olufsen audio system, panoramic sunroof, remotely operated window blinds, front and rear vetilated seats (in sumptuous leather, of course) and even a system to monitor and maintain maximum air quality.

The Very Important Passenger in the back, of course, stays in charge of everything but the task of actually driving. Scroll through the screens on the smartphone-like digital controller and you can position the blinds, the panoramic sunroof, set the temperature and operate the audio, TV and connectivity systems – even the angle of the seats.

The A8 L – a stretched version of the standard Audi flagship – 130mm longer, which all goes into providing room for even the tallest passenger to stretch out, too. There's even a footrest for added comfort.

Big, comfortable armchairs, room to stretch and control your environment and relax in tasteful, discreet luxury

With the V6 diesel engine under the bonnet, even the company accountant might manage a smile, as its official fuel average is 48.7mpg – remarkable for a car of this size – with a CO2 rating of 152g/km. It has two types of catalytic converter, a particulate filter and exhaust gas recirculation system.

The chauffeur is likely to have a bigger grin, though, purely because the A8, even in long wheelbase form, is a joy to drive. That's partly due to its light weight but strong and stiff construction, plus technology such as the race-proven quattro four wheel drive system.

It also has dynamic all-wheel steering – not a new concept but much refined for a four wheel drive system and highly suited to such a large car, particular in tight spots. Essentially while the front wheel steering reacts to conditions (for more feel at speed, more assistance when manouvring) there's also a degree of steering at the rear.

The rear wheels move by up to five degrees against the direction of steering at the front, to significantly reduce the turning circle. At higher speeds, they turn by up to two degrees in the same direction as the front, for a quick turn-in and added stability. It can also act on both axles to restore stability if, for example, you find a muddy stretch on the side of the road affecting just one side of the car.

The net result of these various technologies is that the A8 limo feels as sharp and responsive as other Audis, even the much smaller A3.

The dynamic performance is also aided by an advanced active suspension system, ensuring a featherbed ride without the wallowing through corners which was often a feature of older limousines.

With some more of Audi's Vorsprung durch Technik the A8 is also the world's first production car developed for level 3 highly automated driving. In other words it has systems such as traffic jam pilot, which takes the strain by controlling the steering, braking and accelerating in slow-moving traffic. Parking pilot and garage pilot will take over those tasks for you too,

The A8's interior screams quality, with high grade materials and superb build quality. Add a few of the aforementioned options and control over your environment and you can revel in the sort of luxury usually experienced by first class airline passengers (minus the attentive cabin staff, of course.

But its back seat (or front, for that matter) luxury is matched by first class driving dynamics which could lead enthusiastic drivers to think they don't really want a chauffeur after all.

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Electric cars go up in value at year old

Some electric vehicles are seeing their values rise on the used market, driven by increased demand for low-emission vehicles.

A new study by vehicle data experts Cap HPI that looked at the value of a number of all-electric and hybrid models when they were one year old with 10,000 miles on the clock, and again at two years old with 20,000 miles, found that some of the electrified models had actually increased in price.

The Peugeot Ion appreciated 8.6 per cent in this time, adding £425 to its value, while the plug-in hybrid Vauxhall Ampera increased by 5.3 per cent (£725).

The Nissan Leaf is Britain's best-selling all-electric vehicle, representing about half of all EV sales last year. Its value on the used market increased by £456, or four per cent.

Other hybrids that saw their values increase included the Toyota Yaris Hybrid at 2.6 per cent (£292) and the Lexus GS Hybrid at 0.7 per cent (£178).

Chris Plumb, editor of the Cap HPI Black Book, which tracks used car values, said: "Sales continue to soar in the EV market as drivers have weighed up the benefits of ownership, such as greatly reduced motoring costs, and other incentives around driving an alternative to petrol or diesel.

"Our latest analysis shows that drivers who buy the right EV can still make money on a sale after running it for a year and adding 10,000 miles. This will be a major factor in persuading more drivers to go down the EV road."

A spokesman for Toyota said: "We've seen a huge growth in the market for electric hybrids in the last year, and that continues.

"It's usually the case that increased demand for new vehicles has a positive knock-on effect in the pre-owned market, and that represents yet more value for our customers as residual values for our hybrids rise."

Sales continue to soar in the EV market

A spokesman for Vauxhall, which no longer sells the Ampera as new, said: "The Vauxhall Ampera range-extender was well ahead of its time when launched in 2012 – the electric car with no range anxiety.

"It's still very relevant today, so it's pleasing to see that current owners made the right decision."

Sales of electrified vehicles in the new car market are increasing rapidly. Although the latest figures from industry body the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders show that alternatively fuelled vehicles had a market share of just 5.5 per cent in January, the 9,000 vehicles sold was a 24 per cent jump on last

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Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, March 1, 2018

History: 25 years of Vauxhall Corsa

By Adam Weller

Since launching to the UK in 1993, the Vauxhall Corsa has become a staple of UK roads, with two million examples of the hatch sold since its debut.

The Corsa's predecessor, the Nova, was one of Britain's most popular hatches throughout the 1980s. However, by the end of it's run, the Nova – sold as the Opel Corsa in Europe – was starting to look decidedly dated against rivals such as the Ford Fiesta.

Fortunately, a replacement was in the pipeline…

● VAUXHALL CORSA B (1993-2000)

With the introduction of the Corsa in 1993, Vauxhall up-ended the hatchback market, with the cars curving, modern style proving to be a sales hit, and cemented the nameplate's reputation as a dependable car for small families and young drivers alike.

The Corsa gradually evolved throughout the 90's with minor facelifts, before being replaced in 2000. However, the design lived on for many years in the Chinese and South American markets.

● VAUXHALL CORSA C (2000-2006)

The second UK Corsa was launched in October 2000, and proved to be everything a sequel should be; bigger, sharper and more modern, with more trim and engine options than the previous generation.

The second-generation car proved that the Corsa was here to stay. It was the most popular supermini on the market from 2002-2005, before production stopped in 2006. It was also one of the best-selling cars of any type in the UK, a feat which the Corsa has continually achieved ever since.

Vauxhall Corsa B (1993-2000)

Vauxhall Corsa C (2000-2006)

Vauxhall Corsa E (2014- present)

This generation of the Corsa, and the early examples of the Corsa D that followed, are still vastly popular with young drivers thanks to their cheap running costs and insurance.

● VAUXHALL CORSA D (2006-2014)

When the Corsa D arrived on the market in the latter half of 2006, it was clear that the Corsa had evolved. An all-new platform and new, sweeping styling provided a sleeker, sportier edge to the Corsa. This was further accentuated by a facelift in 2010.

The Corsa D was the first to be bestowed with a VXR badge. The hot hatch launched in 2007 with 189bhp on tap and 0-62 in 6.8secs. However, those figures went up with special editions such as the VXR Nürburgring.

The Corsa D was on the market for some eight years, and as such, is the longest-running Corsa thus far, which is a further testament to its design.

● VAUXHALL CORSA E (2014-PRESENT)

Much like the shift between the first and second-generation, the current Corsa is an evolution of its predecessor, rather than a clean slate. The styling was altered to be more in line with the other stars of the Vauxhall range, with a larger, more striking grille, and an entirely revised look insideand out.

To this day, the Corsa is still one of the biggest-selling cars in the UK and will likely continue to feature prominently on the sales charts for the next 25 years as well.

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7 Jobs

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07921 502123.

4 Pets & Animals

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ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses, Donkeys or Ponies have the required Passport information.

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NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
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Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:
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5 Business & Farming

Business Opportunities

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6 Property

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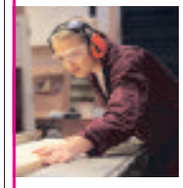

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8 Motoring

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£2,000 ono
07854 949737

AUDI S LINE 2 LITRE.
05 plate, diesel, silver.
87,000 miles.
Full service history.
Lady driver.
Very good condition.
Asking price £2,100.
Please call 07828 178241.

MAZDA MX5 MK3
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£3,200
01902 333072

RENAULT KANGOO ML19DCI1461CC
2011, 117,000 Miles, air con, fsh, long MoT, cruise control, diesel, CD, Navigation System, side loading door.
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07879 403302.

BARGAIN

MERCEDES
2005 plate, diesel car, Model E320 CDi Spot Auto, miles 125,217 miles, MoT till February 2019.
Any trial
£3,195
07787 424281 / 01902 238488.

MERCEDES BENZ B180 SPORT CDi
Automatic, 2010 (60), FSH, Sat Nav, Air con, stereo, etc, MoT November, high miles but immaculate throughout.
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07873 644097.

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Cars Under £1500

BARGAIN

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LOOK

FORD FIESTA 1242CC
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SOLD

FORD FOCUS 1.4
1999, zetec. Green, electric windows, air bag, MoT, metallic paint, central locking, pas. 2 owners.
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BARGAIN

SUZUKI WAGON R
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VAUXHALL CORSA 1.0 COMFORT
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BARGAIN

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MK3, 1997, 2.0.
5-dr hatchback.
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(remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

10 Personals

General

PLEASE FORGIVE
my lack of etiquette, although in the doldrums due to a gardening injury, then what a nice and wonderful surprise in seeing you.
Please whenever you can please continue to call. Everyone made welcome.

Personal

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WLTM gentleman 57 - 68, for Friendship possible Relationship. I enjoy nights in / out, cinema, theatre, holidays.
Dudley / Stourbridge areas.
Photo appreciated (returned)
Box Number P21094 , Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

Sports Clubs

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If you are aged 13-16 (youth) or 16-19 (junior) and would like to play American Football Contact blackcountryvipers@outlook.com or at www.blackcountryvipers.com Training, Sunday 1.30-4, Stourbridge Rugby Club, DY7 6QZ.

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Hat's off – Vikram Solanki is a good friend

Rachael passing on her cricket tips to students

Barrie Richards – leaving Danescourt after 42 years

Lovely – Rachael Heyhoe Flint

One man went to mow – and stayed for 42 years

AFTER 42 years of preparing Wolverhampton's pitch for some of the most famous names in cricket, Barrie Richards' innings is over.

The Danescourt Road groundsman has seen stars such as Vikram Solanki, Moeen Ali, Wasim Jaffer and Baroness Rachael Heyhoe Flint all shine at the crease he has lovingly tendered for four decades.

Now the 65-year-old is set to embark on a new chapter after confirming his retirement. And he leaves with a secret. He isn't even a fan of cricket!

"I'm like the Wolves fan that is forced to go and watch the Albion every week!" Barrie joked.

"Growing up, I played rugby for Newport in Shropshire. I also played football. Cricket just wasn't a game that thrilled me. I just couldn't get excited by it.

"But from the moment I started studying grass and green keeping at college I wanted to be a groundsman.

"Being outside is in my blood. My dad was a farmer on Lord Bradford's estate at Weston Park and I would often help him. And then I got the opportunity to work at Tipton Sports Club where I was tutored by head groundsman Bert Flack.

Perfect

"Then I heard about the opportunity at Wolverhampton Cricket Club and thought it would be perfect for me and my family."

Barrie recalls heading for his interview at Danescourt on a bus with his son Andy in tow in a carrycot.

"A member called Mollie Mackelworth came and picked us up," he said. "Then another member felt sorry for us so he gave us a lift back.

"But as soon as I arrived for the interview I knew the job would be perfect for me. There was a little bungalow down the road and they said that came with the position. My wife and I were wanting another child so it seemed ideal.

"The local schools were good. It was semi-countrified for the children. They could play by the pool and come home and put up tents. They had everything they needed."

Barrie and his wife Ann welcomed two daughters while living in the bungalow.

SPORTING FEATURE

By Joseph Masi

"I may not be the biggest cricket fan but the one thing I'm really going to miss is the camaraderie with the players. Some very special people have passed through this cricket club over the years."

And he quickly struck up a rapport with a number of high-profile players.

"I may not be the biggest cricket fan but the one thing I'm really going to miss is the camaraderie with the players," he said.

"Some very special people have passed through this cricket club over the years.

"Rachael Heyhoe Flint was one of the most lovely ladies you could ever meet. You could always have a laugh and a joke with her. She had a great sense of humour.

"Vikram Solanki is a good friend. Whenever he comes to the ground we always have a chat. I get on really well with Vikram.

"But they have all been great. I have not had any argument with any of them. Of course, they always praise the pitch when they have won. Then blame the pitch when they have lost! But you soon get used to that. But it was always a laugh coming in and having a beer with the players after a game."

A multiple winner of groundsman of the year, Barrie has some of the steadiest hands in the Birmingham League.

And he says hard work is the secret to keeping a pitch so immaculate for so long.

"It's a devotion not a job," he said. "At times it feels like you are working 24 hours a day, seven days week.

"When you have 25-acres to look after, there is always something to do.

"I developed skin cancer 12 years ago but I think you just have to put that down as an occupational hazard.

"This was me, though. I couldn't have worked in an office all day. I wanted to be outside with nature."

He has a number of highlights during his time at Wolverhampton. But he admits the team's victory in the National Knockout back in 1999 really stands out.

Barrie added: "A real highlight was winning the National Knockout in 1999. That was great.

"We had loads of coaches from all the local cricket clubs going down to Lord's.

"We even had our local rivals Walsall getting a coach together. It was a really big thing.

"Ann and I went down with the team. We stayed overnight and had lunch at Lord's and went out on the ground.

"It wasn't bad for someone who doesn't like cricket!"

To prove groundskeeping is in the family blood, his son looks after the fairways at nearby South Staffs Golf Club.

And it's spending time with his family that Barrie is most looking forward to in his retirement.

Support

"My daughter Julie lives in France so I'm looking forward to being able to go over there and stay with her," he said. "My wife Ann passed away fairly recently and we had hoped to see more of the countryside together. When she died, I just lost it and knew I had to retire.

"I have got five grandchildren and three step-grandchildren, they will keep me busy. I've had a full life really so it's time to slow down."

While he will be slowing down, Barrie will still be a regular feature at Danescourt.

"I'm still going to come and support the team and barrack them," he added.

"I've got so many friends here and I know I can always come back and have a laugh.

"I'll miss the players but I'm not going to miss running out to put the covers on when it rains. I'll have a big smile on my face when I see the new groundsman doing that."

Question of sport for Albion and Glassboys

LEGENDS from West Bromwich Albion and Stourbridge FC will go head-to-head in a Question of Sport evening to raise money for a local charity.

The likes of Darren "Big Dave" Moore and Glassboys boss Gary Hackett will face off in a charity version of the TV sports quiz with all money raised for the Mary Stevens Hospice. It takes place on Thursday April 5 in the clubhouse at Stourbridge FC's War Memorial Athletic Ground.

Alongside Moore, Team WBA will comprise Ian Hamilton, James Chambers, Mark Naylor and an as yet unnamed fifth player, while Team Stourbridge will feature Andy Pountney, Jon Ford, Matt Webb and Craig Slater alongside Hackett.

Organisers have also told supporters to expect "a couple of guests" and "rolling subs", as the players will also be taking time out to chat with fans on the night.

Tickets are £8 including a fish & chip supper. To book, visit Marysteven shospice.co.uk/event/charity-question-sport or call (01384) 377778.

Legends on the ball for fundraising clash

ALBION heroes will take on a Glassboys Old Boys XI for the Jane Webb Memorial Trophy – with charity set to be the big winner on the day.

The game, on April 8, will be the third annual legends match between the two sides in aid of Mary Stevens Hospice. It kicks off at the War Memorial Athletic Ground at 2.30pm. The first game ended in a 1-1 draw, while Baggies were victorious last year with a 6-4 scoreline.

Last year's gate surpassed 3,000, a sell-out for Stourbridge FC. The games have helped to raise more than £40,000 for the hospice over the last two years

The Jane Webb Memorial Trophy is named in honour of a hospice supporter who was the inspiration for the game.

Fundraisers at the hospice collaborate on the event each year with original organisers Matt Webb, a former Glassboys player and Mark Naylor, elite development goalkeeping coach at West Bromwich Albion.

Admission is £10, or free for under-15s.

Rhino has sights on powering to victory

RYAN Stewart Davies has promised something special when he fights at Walsall Town Hall this weekend. Davies, aged 25, is on the bill at BCB Promotions' 'The Class of 2018' on Saturday.

'Rhino' has been focusing on increasing his firepower and said he was looking to land a bomb on opponent Myles Vale. He said: "I have been working hard on my strength and power for this one. People come to boxing to see a knockout and I want to be able to do that here."

'The Class of 2018' sees Walsall super welterweight Levi Ferguson, Wolverhampton welterweight Gareth Gardner and Wolverhampton-based Pole Damian Kiwior, welterweight, all fight for the first time. They are joined by Walsall bantamweight Humza Ali, Kingswinford super welterweight Danny Ball and Wolverhampton cruiserweight Antony Woolery.

Tickets are £35 general admission (£40 on the door) and £60 (VIP Ringside to include buffet and waitress service). Call 0845 111 2900 or see https://iboxingtickets.com/

Sport

Grounds for retirement – innings over for Barrie

Page 39

Yeltz leave it late to grab all the points

Halesowen Town 3 Matlock Town 2

HALESOWEN earned three precious points after hitting two late goals in a stunning late comeback.

The Yeltz made a perfect start when Spencer Weir-Daley was left free in the six yard box to head past Matlock's debutant goalkeeper Jordan Pierrepont from Jack Kelly's third minute corner.

But Halesowen failed to build on their early lead as Matlock captain Shaun Harrad met Jake Green's looping cross with a glancing header to equalise six minutes later.

The Gladiators dominated possession and had a great opportunity after 26 minutes when Edward Cribley took advantage of a poor header from Asa Charlton, only for Dan Platt to make a fine blocking save. Harrad missed another chance for Matlock in a 50th minute scramble and Curtis Morrison hit a 53rd minute wide effort straight at Platt.

Weir-Daley almost regained the lead when he rattled the crossbar with a 55th minute shot.

Matlock continued to be profligate and missed yet another sitter in the 57th minute when Michael Williams latched onto Platt's sliced clearance and crossed for Harrad to balloon over the bar from just five yards out.

The visitors finally took a 2-1 lead in the 62nd minute when Cribley stepped inside his marker and his shot from the edge of the area deflected off a defender beyond Platt.

The Yeltz introduced Roland Agbor with eight minutes remaining and turned the tables with a dramatic turnaround as Agbor brought the scores level at 2-2 after slotting home an 88th minute cross from Weir-Daley.

Lee Knight then headed home the crucial winner in the third minute of injury time following a fine cross from the right by Ivor Lawton.

Kelly's eye on his future with Town

HALESOWEN Town man Jack Kelly has pledged his immediate future to the club after turning down an approach from Evo-Stik Premier rivals Rushall Olympic.

Defender Kelly has made 31 appearances for the Yeltz this season, scoring four goals. His latest strike was against the Pics.

The club said in a statement: "Jack said he wanted to show his loyalty to the players and supporters and do everything possible to keep the Yeltz in the Northern Premier League."

At half-time during Halesowen Town's matched against visitors Matlock Town at The Grove, Keith McKenna was introduced as the club's new investor.

McKenna is currently youth team manager at Halesowen and made five appearances for the Yeltz first-team in 1993, scoring on his debut in a 4-1 victory over Crawley Town.

Hagley through to regional finals

CHAMPIONS Hagley returned to form in the WCB Indoor League North division, beating Quatt by 10 wickets.

Quatt started well with Ryan Wheldon (38) and Ed Parker, though the latter went in the third over. Alex Biddle joined the contest and the score accelerated until he was run out. The lower order came and went until Craig Jones and the returning Wheldon added late runs. After both departed, Quatt were bowled out for 92.

Debutant Lee Nightingale (26 no), partnered by Joe Lennon (26 no) set about the Quatt bowling and on their retirement the next two batsmen continued the assault to win with three overs to spare at 94-0.

In the other game, Chaddesley Corbett beat Enville by eight wickets on the last ball of the game.

Enville openers Matt Branch (34 no) and Jono Howells (32 no) set off at a brisk pace until the former Branch retired with the score on 38.

Debutant Jay Willis (28 no) joined Howells and maintained the run rate. With their retirements the remaining batsman perished as they looked for runs and Enville ended on 130-3. In reply, Chaddesley started cautiously but when Enville's change bowlers were introduced Chaddesley increased the run rate, with three out of the top four retiring.

The gap narrowed – 11 were required in the final over and the scores were level with one ball left. Chaddesley went for the big hit and scored the four needed to win at 134-2.

Meanwhile, Hagley progressed to the regional finals at Edgbaston on Sunday by beating Staffordshire champions Sneyd CC. They play Bedfordshire winners Potton Town in the semi-finals.

TYNE TEASE TIRED STOUR

TYNEDALE 52 STOURBRIDGE 29

TWELVES tries last week and 13 tries this week, suggests another close encounter – the difference being an eight minute spell at the start of the second half.

A second road trip in seven days is never ideal, particularly when five key players are missing through injury or personal commitments. The intensity of the previous week's game at Sedgley Park also took its toll.

However, at 06.45am on Saturday the team set off from Stourton Park knowing that win or lose they would still be in second place.

'Dale kicked off and immediately gained a penalty and a tap penalty set their stall out as Ollie Walker darted over for the first five points. Tynedale tight head prop Colin Scullion was stretchered off following a collision with Chad Thorne, who managed just 25 minutes more. Tom Dodd also came off following a Stour yellow card infringement by Sam Wilkes.

But Stour scored 24 unanswered points – 17 when down to 14 men – including a Chris Scott penalty. Robbie Forbes crossed the line after some good work by Ben Tibbetts break and Stour man of the match Nick Murphy. Stour's second try came when Alex Hearle intercepted and sprinted a full 70 metres. Chris Scott hit the conversion and the visitors were ahead 5-17. 'Dale came back but Stour found themselves 17-29 to the good by the break.

The game turned on the home side's purple patch at the start of the second, amassing a further 21 points through tries by Smith, Richard Elliot and Nicholas Cairns. Ash Smith converted all and Tynedale had reversed the scores taking a 16 points advantage.

The third interception try sealed the game for Tynedale when Guy Pike latched on to a speculative pass to score his second try of the game. Smith converted and it was mission impossible for Stour to improve on the 43rd minute bonus point.

Teen learns from world's best

Charlotte Bardsley learned a lot from her first experience as part of the England squad

UP and coming Stourbridge table tennis player Charlotte Bardsley says she learned a huge amount from being part of the England squad at the ITTF Team World Cup in London.

The 15-year-old, who attends Heathfields School in Wolverley, was the youngest member of the England squad and second youngest in the whole women's tournament at the Copper Box Arena in London.

She did not get a chance to play as England, who qualified as hosts and were the lowest-seeded of the 12 teams, were knocked out of the group stage.

A 3-0 defeat by third seeds Hong Kong was followed by a 3-1 reverse against sixth-ranked Singapore, but Bardsley says she will take a lot from being around some of the best players in the world, including the all-conquering Chinese team, which beat second seeds Japan in the final.

"It's been fantastic, not just seeing the players but the whole process," said Bardsley. "I've learned a lot watching the quality of the balls the top players play, the speed and spin they put on it. It was good to see what I need to aim towards."

Ball awaits tougher tests in the ring

KINGSWINFORD fighter Danny Ball is looking to build on his explosive start to professional boxing with another eye-catching performance this weekend.

The 21-year-old fights on BCB Promotions' 'The Class of 2018' at Walsall Town Hall, on Saturday.

Ball has only done six rounds overall in his first three fights, with his scintillating power ending two of his bouts prematurely in the first round. Saturday's fight will be his last scheduled four-rounder before he moves up to six.

He feels he has a lot to improve on and he is hoping for a tougher test.

"I couldn't have asked for a better start to my career," Ball said. "But this is just the start and I just have to keep focused and keep it up.

"There is still plenty to work on. I want to build on my fitness even more and I want to get a few more rounds under my belt.

"I want to be tested in this one so I know what my limits are so I am hoping for a tough fight."

The super welterweight has been matched against the tough Danny Little, who stopped previously unbeaten Jordan Clayton last time out.

Ball added: "I want to make it exciting and give the fans something to enjoy here," he added.

"Hopefully there will be a title fight at the end of the year. If I get another stoppage then I should get fast tracked to bigger things."

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Speedway sponsor stays loyal to club

CRADLEY Heathens have received an off-track boost with Motor Market continuing their role as title sponsors heading into the 2018 campaign.

The car dealership have backed the Heathens for a number of years and stepped up their involvement in 2015.

The club will now enter their fourth season as the Motor Market Heathens and owner Dean Bridge is delighted to keep supporting his boyhood speedway club heading into the National Trophy.

Bridge said: "As far as we're concerned, there wasn't too much of a question about continuing. We're pleased for it to continue."

★★★

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